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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Emotional Intelligence, Entrepreneurial Intention, University Graduates	<p>Current study is an endeavor to empirically test predictive role of emotional intelligence towards shaping entrepreneurial intention of public sector universities graduates of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Total 352 business administration students of final year enrolled in diverse public sector higher educational institutions were surveyed for this purpose. Reason behind choosing this particular target population was because they are just having to complete their academic journey and will have to seriously think about the career option they will have to choose in their professional life. For data collection, questionnaire was used as instrument having Likert type question. As target population of current study is homogeneous hence simple random sampling technique was employed to choose respondents among targeted population. In this regard, measures were adopted from previous literature. Scale reliability, validity, correlation and linear regression were employed as data analyses statistical tools. Results revealed that emotional intelligence playing significant role in predicting entrepreneurial intention of university graduates.</p> <p> 2023 Journal of Social Research Development</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Governments are greatly concerned about ongoing problem of unemployment, as there are more job seekers than available positions. As a result, problem may be solved to some extent by fostering the establishment of new businesses, since it is unrealistic for governments to provide employment for everyone (Lyu, Shepherd & Lee, 2023). Concept of entrepreneurship has emerged as promising remedy for unemployment and various challenges posed by global crises (Nawaz & Khattak, 2019).

Consequently, there has been significant research interest in entrepreneurial intention over the past two decades. The study of entrepreneurship has focused upon comprehending the motivations behind initiating and developing new businesses, which plays a vital role in national growth (Wu & Wu, 2008). The governments consider understanding this drive to be vital issue. Entrepreneurship involves perceiving prospects to create innovative ideas that enhance people lifestyles (Chamola & Jain, 2017). It entails coordinating chances, resources, and individuals. Recognizing opportunities is considered as the base for entrepreneurship and which is, no doubt, intentional process (Krueger Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). Still, Lyu, Shepherd and Lee (2023) acknowledged entrepreneurship as an intended significant process.

Entrepreneurial intention has emerged as the crucial predictor of future entrepreneurial behavior. The entrepreneurial intention, according to Krueger et al., (2000), refers to a deliberate decision of someone to establish a new venture as opposed to an adoption. While an individual may possess the basic abilities and self-efficacy to be entrepreneur, without intention to pursue entrepreneurship, they may not engage in the entrepreneurial process. Entrepreneurial intention is as the desire of an individual to create a new venture and introduce innovative ideas in an existing framework (Wu & Wu, 2008). Greenberg and Baron (2008) highlighted that the emotional intelligence significantly effects entrepreneurial intention. Emotional intelligence is ability of a person to comprehend both their own emotions and feelings of others, according to theory of emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Emotional intelligence is capacity to control one's own emotions and sentiments while simultaneously being able to recognize and realize (Salovey and Mayer (1990). Zampetakis, Kafetsios, Bouranta, Dewett, and Moustakis (2009), people with high emotional intelligence are better able to change their emotions and respond to others in the various situations, which enables them to influence and persuade others and, in turn, develop the entrepreneurial ambitions.

Specifically highlighting link between trait emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial ambition, Zampetakis et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in determining the entrepreneurial intention. Emotional intelligence plays significant role in shaping entrepreneurial intentions of university graduates (Baron & Tang, 2011). Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, and effectively recognize and respond to emotions of others. It consists of several key components, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Zhao, H., & Seibert, 2006; Lyu, Shepherd & Lee, 2023). Additionally, studies have examined the impact of personal, environmental, and entrepreneurship-related characteristics. The university graduates with high emotional intelligence are more likely to have a clear understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, values, and passions (Liñán & Chen, 2009; Chamola & Jain, 2017). This self-awareness helps them identify entrepreneurial potential and align it with their personal goals and aspirations. These include factors like achievement needs, self-efficacy, entrepreneurship mentorship. The present study aims to empirically investigate the cause and effect connection between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intention among business administration graduates of final year enrolled in diverse public sector higher educational institutions of KP, Pakistan.

RQ1: Does emotional intelligence have any relationship with entrepreneurial intention among university graduates?

RQ2: Does emotional intelligence have any impact on entrepreneurial intention of university graduates?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial intention deals with someone's aspiration of establishing a new business with new idea and to pursue an entrepreneurial career and to be future entrepreneur (Hmieleski & Corbett, 2006). Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) describe it as a deliberate attitude or action towards initiating a new business venture or exploring opportunities within an existing organization. Kuratko, Hornsby, and Goldsby (2007) define it as explicit plan of establishing a business. Another interpretation of entrepreneurial intention is the desire to having and to launch own business, accompanied by plans to become entrepreneur (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud, 2000). Entrepreneurial intention is regarded as foundational mindset required for embarking on entrepreneurial journey (Youn & Hyun, 2019). It is demonstrated through entrepreneur's personal endeavors in initiating startup activities, driven by their individual interests and actions (Krueger et al., 2000). Moreover, positive attitude towards startups is reflected in an entrepreneur's active connection with the prospects of establishing their own ventures in future (Crant, 2000; Kim, 2012). Katz and Gartner (1988) highlight entrepreneurial intention as a crucial determinant in predicting entrepreneurial behavior, drawing from the theory of planned behavior. In this linking, Bird (1988) identifies two key factors inducing entrepreneurial intention: individual entrepreneurial characteristics (likewise personality, ability, experience) and environmental factors.

The development of individual entrepreneurial traits occurs through interactions with environment and participation in entrepreneurship-related activities (Jung, Yang & Kim, 2013). The key factors that influence entrepreneurial intention at individual level encompass various aspects (Kim, 2012). These include satisfaction with entrepreneurship education, attitude and experience. Furthermore, researchers have delved into psychological tendencies and personality traits of founders that play a role in shaping entrepreneurial intention (Hmieleski & Corbett, 2006). These traits encompass self-confidence, risk-taking ability, need to achieve, locus of control, innovativeness, risk-taking, and reactiveness (Baron & Tang, 2011). Additionally, studies have examined the impact of personal, environmental, and entrepreneurship-related characteristics. These include factors like realization needs, self-efficacy, entrepreneurship mentorship (Chamola & Jain, 2017). Significance of searching for and acquiring knowledge and information to tackle obstacles encountered by individuals while starting their own businesses has been emphasized (Lyu, Shepherd & Lee, 2023). Previous research has differentiated outcomes of similar personal traits; later present study seeks to uncover potential link of emotional intelligence related to entrepreneurial intention by taking business students of universities under consideration.

#### Emotional Intelligence

The main idea of emotional intelligence was firstly evolved by Salovey and Mayer in 1990, and it gained further recognition through the Goleman's bestselling book "Emotional Intelligence" in 1995.

Over time, researchers like [Bar-On \(1997\)](#) and [Goleman \(1995\)](#) have presented diverse definitions of Emotional Intelligence, but the most widely accepted one is provided by [Salovey et al. \(1990\)](#). Emotional intelligence is described as state of human intelligence that includes "ability to perceive and differentiate one's own and others' emotions, and to use this awareness to guide one's thinking and behaviour." By including 4-interconnected dimensions seeing emotions, employing emotions to support cognitive processes, understanding emotions, and controlling emotions—this definition was improved ([Mayer & Salovey, 1997](#)). Cartwright and Pappas centered that emotional intelligence is the ability to integrate emotional and cognitive knowledge while processing emotions cognitively. In present-day scientific research, various approaches to understanding Emotional Intelligence can be found, including ability model, the mixed model, and integrative model, each with convincing and complementary aspects. Ability model concentrates on specific skills and abilities that are vital for Emotional Intelligence, like emotional awareness, utilizing emotional information in thinking, comprehending and analyzing emotions (particularly in terms of evaluating & categorizing them), and expressing emotions.

Additionally, the model encompasses emotional regulation in oneself and others, which involves engaging with, disengaging from, monitoring, and reflecting on emotions, as well as reassessing one's perception of specific situations. Researchers have identified specific abilities associated with the emotional intelligence using [Mayer et al. \(1997\)](#) model, which thus comprises four interconnected branches. This model is considered an integrative approach as it encompasses all aspects of general Emotional Intelligence. The four branches are organized in a progressive manner, with the emotion perception serving as the foundational skill and emotion management being the most complex. The capacity to regulate one's own emotions and those of others relies on skills developed in the other three branches. Another approach to understanding Emotional Intelligence is the Mixed-Model, introduced by [Bar-On \(1997\)](#), which emphasizes a combination of abilities. [Cartwright et al. \(2008\)](#) noted that the Mixed-Model encompasses the five broad categories: intrapersonal emotion abilities, interpersonal emotion abilities, adaptability, stress management, and overall mood. The emotional Intelligence has consistently shown associations with significant life outcomes, including enhanced mental well-being ([Schutte et al., 2007](#)), improved social relationships ([Lopes, 2004](#)), & increased professional success.

The previous studies have provided evidence that Emotional Intelligence predicts job performance ([O'Boyle et al., 2011](#)), job satisfaction, job involvement, and job loyalty ([Carmeli, 2003](#)). In a study by [Lopes et al. \(2006\)](#), the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and positive workplace outcomes was examined. The researchers have determined that general Emotional Intelligence is strongly associated with multiple indicators of job performance, evaluation by human resources, influence, and attitudes. Notably, a previous longitudinal study conducted by [Snarey and Vaillant \(1985\)](#) found that the job performance is more influenced by individuals' abilities to adapt to and manage emotions, handle stress and frustration, and foster positive relationships than by IQ alone ([Ahmetoglu, Leutner, & Chamorro, 2011](#)). For entrepreneurs, Emotional Intelligence abilities hold particular relevance due to the need to navigate and manage the complex social interactions with diverse stakeholders. These interactions encompass tasks such as pitching to the investors, acquiring and retaining customers, negotiating deals, and effectively engaging with the employees, suppliers,

and partners. Emotional Intelligence encompasses the combination of diverse traits and refers to an individual's capacity to effectively regulate and control their own emotions, accurately perceive the emotional states of others, and exert influence over their perspectives and behaviors (Ghorbani, Johari, & Moghadam, 2012).

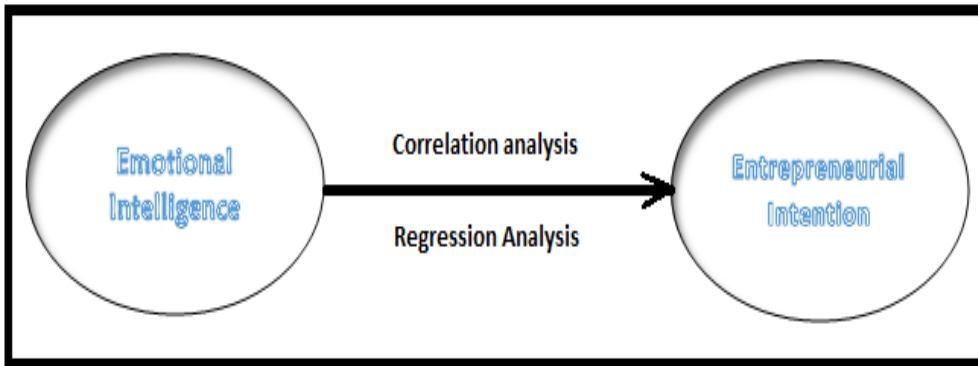
### Emotional Intelligence & Entrepreneurial Intention

The individuals having high level of emotional intelligence may leverage empathy, social skills and problem solving to build strong relationships with and hence can win over people (Mills, 2020). The possession of Emotional Intelligence is considered a crucial determinant of individual's inclination towards entrepreneurship. Those who have developed emotional intelligence abilities exhibit higher likelihood of showing interest in pursuing entrepreneurship as a profession (Archana & Kumari, 2018). Moreover, individuals who effectively manage and direct their emotional state demonstrate an increased inclination towards innovative aspirations, greater confidence, and higher probability of initiating new ventures (Chamola & Jain, 2017). According to study by Kong and Zhao (2013), people with high emotional intelligence tend to have a positive influence and incline towards good emotional experiences. These findings acme significant predictive power of emotional intelligence across various domains and contexts. According to research by Carmeli (2003), those with high emotional intelligence regularly feel happy emotions and are generally happy, whereas those with thw poor emotional intelligence are likely to feel depressed, angry and dissatisfied. According to Sy, Tram, and O'Hara (2006), emotionally intelligent people are resilient and stronger emotional self-awareness and self-control.

When compared to people with weaker emotional intelligence, they also show a stronger ability to comprehend causes of stress and use practical coping mechanisms for unfavorable results. People with higher levels of the emotional intelligence, according to Kafetsios and Zampetakis (2008), may handle stress better. Entrepreneurial occupation is characterized by inherent risks and uncertainties, with entrepreneurs risking their financial position, mental well-being, and family relationships (Brockhaus, 1980). According to the fit theory, emotionally intelligent individuals are particularly well-suited for the entrepreneurship and are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. This is due to their ability to navigate and overcome the aversive emotions and stress, swiftly recovering from adverse emotional experiences by effectively managing their emotions throughout the process of establishing a new venture. While previous research has predominantly focused on the outcomes that Emotional Intelligence can predict, recent studies suggest that it also plays a crucial role in predicting entrepreneurial success. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent individuals, given their positive impact (Kong et al., 2013), tend to perceive situations in the positive light, identifying the opportunities and maintaining an optimistic outlook regarding the potential for the successful new venture creation (Baron, 2008). Therefore, based on these premises, the current study has developed the following hypotheses.

- H1: Emotional intelligence is significantly positively associated with entrepreneurial intention among university graduates
- H2: Emotional intelligence have a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention of university graduates

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework



**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

University graduates of final year enrolled in business administration program at various public sector universities of KP, Pakistan comprises the target population of current study. Main reason behind this particular set of target population is, as they are near to complete their education and will seriously think about their career option they will have to choose after completion their studies. Furthermore, as they belong to different areas of the country which make them a diverse group of individual having different cultural and social backgrounds. The target groups were chosen using a simple random sample methodology since sampling method is fit for homogeneous populations in which each response is similar to the others. The closed-ended questionnaire with the Likert-type questions about the study's current constructs served as the data collection instrument. Measures for the current study's constructs were taken from the existing research. Entrepreneurial intention was measured through scale developed by [Linan and Chen \(2009\)](#), having total six (6) items whereas for measuring emotional intelligence, a scale developed by [Wong and Law \(2002\)](#) having sixteen (16) items was adopted.

**RESULTS OF STUDY**

The collected data was then analyzed by applying various statistical tools like scale reliability & validity, correlation and regression, to get the empirical evidences for current study. According to [Haynes, Kubany and Richard \(1995\)](#) the initial stage of data analysis is to check the reliability and validity of scale employed by researcher in social research process. Scale reliability was checked through checking ( $\alpha$ ) value whereas scale validity was checked over exploratory factor analysis by checking sample adequacy case Bartlett Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Tests. Results obtained are presented as:

Table 1 Reliability & Validity Statistics of Emotional Intelligence

Reliability and Validity Statistics (EMI)		N=352		
Reliability Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )		.811		
KMO Measures of Sampling Adequacy	.749	Matrix		
Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Squa	1788.102	Items	FL
	df	1.20	EmlQ1	.592
	Sig.	.000	EmlQ2	.605

			EmIQ3	.628
	Required	Computed	EmIQ4	.523
KMO test	=or>=.7	.749	EmIQ5	.446
Bartlett's test	=0r<.05	.000	EmIQ6	.595
Factor Loading	=0r>.4		EmIQ7	.466
			EmIQ8	.639
			EmIQ9	.515
			EmIQ10	.430
			EmIQ11	.522
			EmIQ12	.602
			EmIQ13	.552
			EmIQ14	.578
			EmIQ15	.505
			EmIQ16	.486

Table 1 shows the reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) i.e. .811, which suggests a moderately high level of internal consistency for the emotional intelligence questionnaire. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure assesses the sampling adequacy for factor analysis. A value of .749 indicates that the data is likely suitable for factor analysis since it exceeds the recommended threshold of .7. This suggests that the variables in the analysis are likely interrelated. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: test assesses whether correlation matrix is significantly different from identity matrix, indicating the presence of the relationships among the variables. The obtained approximate chi-square value of 1788.102 is highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. This supports the factorability of the data. Factor loadings represent the strength and direction of the relationship between each item and the underlying factor(s). In present analysis, the factor loadings for Emotional intelligence items range from .430 to .639. The recommended threshold for adequate factor loading is typically set at .4 or higher. In this connection, based on this criterion, all items seem to have acceptable factor loadings. Generally, the results suggest that the emotional intelligence questionnaire demonstrates satisfactory reliability and validity. In this linking, internal consistency is reasonably high, and the factor analysis provides support for the underlying structure of the aforesaid instrument.

Table 2 Reliability & Validity Statistics of Entrepreneurial Intention

Reliability and Validity Statistics (EI)		N=352	
Reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ )		.880	
KMO Measures of Sampling Adequacy	.839	Matrix	
Approx. Chi-Squa	1145.505	Items	Factor Loading
Bartlett's test of Sphercity	df	EIQ1	.596
	Sig.	EIQ2	.786
	Required	Computed	EIQ3
KMO test	=or>=.7	.839	EIQ4
Bartlett's test	=0r<.05	.000	EIQ5
Factor Loading	=0r>.4		EIQ6
			.805

Table 2 shows the reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of .880 indicates a high level of internal consistency for entrepreneurial intention questionnaire. This coefficient, commonly known as Cronbach's alpha, suggests that the items in the questionnaire are reliably measuring the same underlying construct. Values above .70 are generally considered acceptable, and in present study the coefficient of .880 exceeds this threshold. Table 2 also shows the KMO Measures of Sampling Adequacy: The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure assesses the sampling adequacy for factor analysis. A value of .839 indicates that the data is likely suitable for factor analysis since it exceeds recommended threshold of .7. This suggests that variables in this analysis are likely interrelated. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity test evaluates whether the correlation matrix is significantly different from an identity matrix, indicating the presence of relationships among the variables. The obtained approximate chi-square value of 1145.505 is highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), suggesting that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

This provides support for factorability of data. Factor loadings represent the strength and direction of the relationship between each item and underlying factor(s). In this analysis, the factor loadings for the Entrepreneurial intention items range from .596 to .855. All items have factor loadings above the commonly recommended threshold of .4, indicating acceptable relationships with the underlying construct. Overall, the results indicate that the Entrepreneurial intention questionnaire has high internal consistency and demonstrates satisfactory reliability and validity. The internal consistency is strong, and the factor analysis supports the underlying structure of the instrument. However, analysis and interpretation should be conducted in consideration of the specific research objectives and context.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis Coefficients (H1)

Construct		EMI	EI
Emotional Intelligence (EMI)	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	~	
	N	352	
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	Pearson Correlation	.585**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	~
	N	352	352

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level 0.01

Results in the above table 3 presents results about correlation analysis of current study variables. Results shown that emotional intelligence is significantly positively linked with entrepreneurial intention ( $\beta=.585, p=.000$ ) among university students in present study context. Hence hypothesis one i.e. H1, developed for current study is accepted. For testing Hypothesis 2 developed for present study, linear regression analysis was conducted. Empirical results obtained from analysis are offered in table 4 below

Table 4 Regression Analysis

Model	R	Adjust. R2	SEE	Model Summary			
				R2Change	Change Statistics FChange	SFC	F



1	.585	.343	.341	.62154	.343	182.345	1	350	.000	182.345	.000
	Model					Coefficients					
						USC		SC	t		Sig.
					B	Std. Error		Beta			
	(Constant)				1.439	.188			7.662		.000
	Emotional Intelligence				.650	.048		.585	13.504		.000
	a. Predictor: Emotional Intelligence		b. Criterion: Entrepreneurial Intention								

The first portion of above table 4 illustrates the empirical results obtained from regression analysis about R, R<sup>2</sup>, adjusted R<sup>2</sup>, F statistics and overall model significance levels. R value represents the strength of association between independent and dependent variable of current study, .585 which means that almost 59% change will occur in the value of dependent value due to one unit change in the value of independent value. In the above table, the value of R<sup>2</sup> shows the collective variation occurs in the value of dependent variable due to change occur in value of independent variable, .343 which means total 34% change in dependent variable caused due to change in independent variable. The value of adjusted R<sup>2</sup> should be near to value of R<sup>2</sup> which in present case is recorded satisfactory i.e. .341. The value of F shows model fitness which crossed the minimum required value in present study analysis whereas the Sig. = .000 shows that overall model calculating the impact of predictor on criterion variable is highly significant. Second portion of above table 4 presents the results about individual variation occurs in dependent variable due to independent variable. Here as in current study a single predicting variable i.e. emotional intelligence is used hence the same value of R is recorded as the variation in the value of entrepreneurial intention due to emotional intelligence which is .585 with p-value of .000. Hence hypothesis two i.e. H<sub>2</sub>, developed for present study is also accepted.

### DISCUSSION

The aim of present study was to empirically examine the predictive role of proactive personality towards entrepreneurial intention among the university students. Two basic research questions were focused i.e. RQ-1 Does emotional intelligence has any association with entrepreneurial intention among university students? As well as RQ-2 Does the emotional intelligence have any impact on entrepreneurial intention of university students. Keeping in view the research questions, relevant existing literature was discussed in literature review portion of current study. Based on which two research hypotheses (in line with research questions) were developed. To get the answer of these research questions and testing the developed hypotheses, 352 students of business administration program of final year enrolled in various public sector universities of KP, Pakistan, were surveyed. Scale reliability and validity, correlation and regression, statistical tools were employed to get the empirical evidences for current study. Results revealed that emotional intelligence is significantly positively associated with entrepreneurial intention among university students in the present study context. Results also revealed that emotional intelligence has significant impact on entrepreneurial intention of university students.

These findings are in line with the previous findings obtained by [Nawaz and Khattak \(2019\)](#) who resisted in their study significant positive association of emotional intelligence & entrepreneurial

intention as well as cause-and-effect relationship between these two study variables. The findings of current study also validate the results obtained by [Chein-chi, Sun, Yang, Zheng and Li \(2020\)](#) who contended a positive significant association of the emotional competence with entrepreneurial intention by taking 312 college students under consideration from China. Results revealed that emotional intelligence is significantly positively associated with entrepreneurial intention among university students in the present study context. Hence, both the research hypotheses developed for current study were accepted.

### CONCLUSION

On bases of above findings, it is concluded that emotional intelligence is an important personality attribute which is necessary for shaping entrepreneurial intention of university students and divert their intention towards establishing their own particular ventures and to put their share in the economic development of any country instead of to become a job seeker and to be a burden over the economy. Several studies have shown a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intention. Graduates with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to have a greater desire to start their own businesses and exhibit a higher propensity for entrepreneurial activities. The predictive role of emotional intelligence in shaping the entrepreneurial intention of university graduates is significant. Higher levels of emotional intelligence provide individuals with the necessary skills and mindset to navigate challenges. It is suggested to university administration that for infusing the soul of entrepreneurship in minds of young graduates of universities, different type of workshops, seminars, business plan competitions and other entrepreneurial related activities should be arranged at the campuses.

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