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EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES AS PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL RESILIENCE: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM YOUTH-OWNED ENTERPRISES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the predictive influence of emotional intelligence dimensions on entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria. Adopting a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design, a sample size of 384 youth enterprise operators was determined using Cochran's formula, while proportionate sampling was employed to allocate respondents across Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States. From the 384 questionnaires administered, 318 valid responses were retrieved and analysed. Emotional intelligence was operationalized through self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, while entrepreneurial resilience was measured using indicators of adaptability, persistence, and recovery capacity. Multiple regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesised relationships, with hypotheses evaluated at the 0.05 significance level. The results revealed that the model explained 61.2% of the variance in entrepreneurial resilience ($R^2 = 0.612$, $F = 221.76$, $p < 0.001$). Self-regulation ($\beta = 0.352$, $p < 0.001$), empathy ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$), and self-awareness ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as significant positive predictors of entrepreneurial resilience. Notably, self-regulation emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that emotional restraint, impulse control, and proactive stress management are associated with enhanced business resilience. The study concludes that emotional competencies, as conceptualised within Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence Theory, are significant behavioural determinants of entrepreneurial resilience. The study contributes to the behavioural entrepreneurship literature by demonstrating the primacy of self-regulation as a resilience-enabling competency in resource-constrained entrepreneurial environments, with implications for the design of emotionally integrated entrepreneurship curricula and enterprise development programmes in Nigeria.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, entrepreneurial resilience, youth entrepreneurship, self-regulation, South-South Nigeria

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has increasingly emerged as an important mechanism for addressing unemployment, poverty, and economic underdevelopment in developing economies, particularly Nigeria. This relevance has become more pronounced in response to persistent labour market pressures and limited formal employment opportunities available to young people. Recent labour market evidence from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024b) indicates that youth unemployment and underemployment remain significant national concerns, while informal and small-scale enterprises continue to absorb a substantial proportion of economically active youths.

Similarly, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2021) identified small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as major contributors to employment generation and economic activity across Nigeria. Despite their economic significance, many youth-owned enterprises experience high rates of business discontinuity, constrained access to finance, and heightened exposure to economic instability. These challenges suggest that enterprise survival depends not only on technical and managerial competence but also on entrepreneurs' capacity to adapt and function effectively under pressure.

The increasing incidence of business failure among youth-owned enterprises has become an important economic and social concern because unsuccessful ventures reduce productivity, weaken job creation capacity, and deepen poverty among young people (Omezurike & Ogona, 2025). Consequently, scholars have shifted attention toward behavioural and psychological capabilities that strengthen entrepreneurial sustainability. Among these capabilities, emotional intelligence has gained considerable scholarly attention as a factor that influences how individuals respond to uncertainty, regulate behaviour, and maintain productive interactions in demanding environments.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively manage emotions in oneself and others (Bru-Luna et al., 2021). The concept received wider scholarly recognition through Goleman (1995), who argued that emotional intelligence shapes decision-making, interpersonal effectiveness, motivation, and workplace performance. Within entrepreneurial contexts, emotional intelligence extends beyond emotional awareness to include the capacity to remain composed under pressure, interpret environmental signals, sustain motivation, and maintain constructive relationships that support business continuity.

Pathinettampadiyan and Thavaraj (2025) observed that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are better positioned to manage stress, preserve self-confidence, and maintain social networks that facilitate entrepreneurial outcomes. Likewise, Kiishi (2024) and Alotaibi and Badawi (2023) argued that emotional intelligence enhances entrepreneurs' ability to regulate negative emotions, adapt to uncertainty, and sustain engagement during periods of business difficulty.

The relevance of emotional intelligence becomes particularly evident when examined through the lens of entrepreneurial resilience. Entrepreneurial resilience refers to an entrepreneur's capacity to absorb setbacks, adapt to changing circumstances, recover from adverse experiences, and continue pursuing business goals despite uncertainty and disruption (Ahamed et al., 2025).

Rather than representing an independent entrepreneurial attribute, resilience may be strengthened by emotional competencies that enable individuals to regulate emotional responses, maintain optimism, and make adaptive decisions under stressful conditions. From this perspective, emotional intelligence provides a behavioural mechanism through which entrepreneurs sustain resilience during periods of financial pressure, operational instability, and competitive uncertainty.

In contemporary business environments characterised by volatility and unpredictability, entrepreneurs who effectively manage emotional demands may possess stronger resilience capacities and greater potential for business continuity. Although entrepreneurship research in Nigeria has examined issues such as entrepreneurial intention, innovation, self-efficacy, enterprise development, and business performance, limited empirical attention has been given to understanding how emotional intelligence contributes to entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises (Adeosun & Aruleba, 2025).

Existing studies have largely concentrated on entrepreneurial motivation and business survival outcomes while providing insufficient explanation of the psychological processes that support entrepreneurial adaptation and persistence. For example, Nwibe and Ogbuanya (2024) examined emotional intelligence in relation to entrepreneurial intention among Nigerian undergraduates, whereas Isichei et al. (2024) focused on entrepreneurial resilience and business survival. However, empirical evidence explaining how emotional intelligence functions as a behavioural resource for strengthening entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises remains limited.

This gap is particularly important within Nigeria's increasingly volatile business environment, where young entrepreneurs regularly confront economic uncertainty, resource constraints, and operational disruptions. Understanding the psychological capabilities that enable entrepreneurs to remain adaptive and productive under such conditions is therefore both theoretically and practically significant.

Insights from this study may assist policymakers, entrepreneurship educators, youth development agencies, and enterprise support institutions in designing interventions that strengthen the emotional and adaptive capacities of young entrepreneurs. Consequently, this study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria with the objective of determining how emotional competencies influence entrepreneurs' ability to survive, adapt, and sustain business performance in challenging operating environments.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a behavioural and psychological construct that explains an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in self and others (Alotaibi & Badawi, 2023; Bru-Luna et al., 2021). In organisational and entrepreneurial contexts, EI is increasingly recognised as a critical determinant of adaptive behaviour, decision-making quality, and interpersonal effectiveness. It encompasses core dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies enable individuals to respond constructively to pressure, uncertainty, and failure, conditions that are highly prevalent in entrepreneurial environments.

Recent literature has reinforced the relevance of emotional intelligence in entrepreneurship, particularly in emerging economies where business conditions are highly volatile. For example, studies conducted in Nigeria indicate that emotionally intelligent individuals demonstrate stronger entrepreneurial intentions and adaptive behavioural responses through enhanced self-efficacy and improved interpersonal relationships (Nwibe & Ogbuanya, 2024).

Similarly, emotional intelligence has been linked to better opportunity recognition and improved coping mechanisms in dynamic business environments (Adeniyi et al., 2023). This suggests that EI is not merely a psychological trait but a functional capability that supports entrepreneurial action and sustainability.

From an organisational behaviour perspective, emotional intelligence enhances entrepreneurs' ability to manage stress, resolve conflicts, and maintain productive relationships with stakeholders such as employees, customers, and suppliers. In youth-owned enterprises, where managerial experience is often limited, EI becomes particularly important in stabilizing emotional responses during financial setbacks, market fluctuations, and operational difficulties.

Concept of Entrepreneurial Resilience

Entrepreneurial resilience refers to the capacity of entrepreneurs to withstand adversity and recover from setbacks (Ayala & Manzano, 2014), allowing them to adapt to changing circumstances and continue pursuing business goals despite significant challenges (Fatoki, 2018). According to Pennetta et al. (2025) it is a dynamic capability that reflects persistence, flexibility, and psychological strength in the face of entrepreneurial stressors. Rather than being a fixed, static trait, this form of resilience actively evolves through experiential learning and ongoing interaction with changing environmental conditions (Ayala & Manzano, 2014).

From the point of view of youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria, resilience is especially critical due to persistent economic instability (Ike & Uchenna, 2025), infrastructural deficiencies, limited access to finance, and policy inconsistencies (Newo et al., 2023). Empirical evidence shows that entrepreneurial resilience is strongly associated with business survival and sustainability in emerging economies (Isichei et al., 2024). Thus, entrepreneurs with higher resilience levels are more likely to maintain business continuity even when faced with financial shocks, competitive pressures, and operational disruptions.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, this study conceptualizes emotional intelligence as the independent variable influencing entrepreneurial resilience as the dependent variable among youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria.

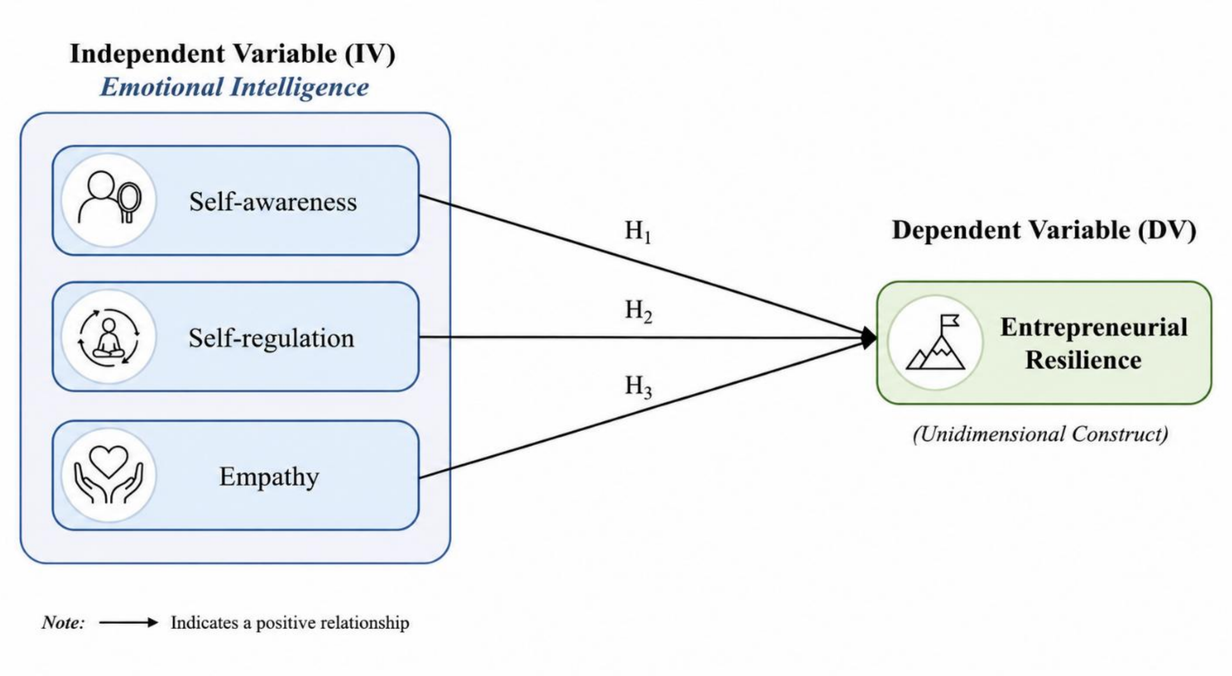

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researchers' conceptualization (2026)

This framework proposes that emotional intelligence drives entrepreneurial resilience in Nigerian youth-owned enterprises. It focuses on three critical dimensions: self-awareness for recognizing personal limits, self-regulation for managing stress and impulses, and empathy for building vital stakeholder relationships. Collectively, these psychological resources enable entrepreneurs to adapt to and recover from business failures. The model assumes that strengthening these specific emotional competencies directly boosts resilience, leading to greater sustainability in a challenging market.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Emotional Intelligence Theory developed by Daniel Goleman. The theory explains that individuals who possess high emotional intelligence are better able to understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively in dealing with challenges and social interactions. Goleman (1995) identified key dimensions of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, which are essential for effective decision-making, adaptability, and interpersonal relationships (Antonopoulou et al., 2026).

From the perspective of entrepreneurship, these emotional capabilities enable youth entrepreneurs to manage stress, cope with uncertainty, maintain optimism, and recover from business setbacks (Nwibe & Ogbuanya, 2025). This theory is relevant to this study because entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria are characterized by intense competition, economic instability, and environmental uncertainty, all of which require strong emotional and psychological resilience. Therefore, the framework suggests that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are more likely to demonstrate resilience, persistence, and sustainability in managing their enterprises despite challenging business conditions.

Empirical Review

Nwibe and Ogbuanya (2024) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intention among university undergraduates in Nigeria, with particular attention to the mediating role of self-efficacy domains. The study was conducted among 192 Electrical/Electronic Technology Education students drawn from four federal universities in South-East Nigeria. Using covariance-based structural equation modelling and Hayes' PROCESS analysis, the researchers found that emotional intelligence significantly enhanced entrepreneurial intention when considered independently. However, within the mediation model, the direct effect became insignificant, indicating the importance of self-efficacy mechanisms. Specifically, perceived competence and perceived persistence partially mediated the relationship, while perceived control showed no significant effect. The study concludes that emotionally intelligent students are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions when they possess confidence in their abilities and persistence toward entrepreneurial goals

Meize-Oscar (2025) studied the relationship between entrepreneurial stress, emotional intelligence, and the performance of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study focused on how financial stress and self-regulation influence profitability and operational efficiency among entrepreneurs. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 367 MSME operators through structured questionnaires and analyzed using regression analysis. The findings revealed that financial stress significantly and positively affected profitability, indicating that entrepreneurs may develop adaptive coping strategies that improve short-term business outcomes. The study concluded that emotional resilience and emotional intelligence training are essential for improving entrepreneurial success and sustainable MSME growth in Nigeria.

Nsien and Oton (2025) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial risk-taking ability among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study involved 392 respondents with diverse business scales and employed a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation, t-test, ANOVA, and regression analysis. Findings revealed that entrepreneurs demonstrated relatively high levels of emotional intelligence, particularly in motivation and social skills, which also recorded the highest mean scores. Results further showed a significant positive relationship between all dimensions of emotional intelligence and risk-taking behaviour, with motivation emerging as the strongest predictor. Emotional intelligence accounted for 37% of the variance in entrepreneurial risk-taking, indicating a substantial explanatory power. The study concluded that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are more likely to engage in calculated risk-taking, and recommended integrating emotional intelligence training into entrepreneurship development programmes to enhance business performance.

Umoh et al. (2020) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and risk-taking capacity among entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Using a survey research design, data were collected from 400 entrepreneurs and analyzed through multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation had significant positive effects on risk-taking capacity, while empathy and social skills were not statistically significant predictors. The model further showed a strong explanatory power, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.625. The study concluded that emotional intelligence, particularly self-focused dimensions, plays a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurs' willingness to take risks and recommended enhanced training to strengthen emotional awareness and regulation for improved entrepreneurial decision-making.

Egbere and Omogbiya (2022) did a study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and the innovativeness dimension of entrepreneurial orientation among small and medium-scale enterprises in Nigeria. Using a survey research design, data were collected from selected SMEs in Delta State and analyzed through descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression techniques. The study focused on two key dimensions of emotional intelligence: personal and social intelligence, and their influence on entrepreneurial innovativeness. The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and innovativeness, indicating that both personal and social competencies enhance entrepreneurial creativity and adaptability. The study concluded that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are more innovative and better able to respond to environmental changes.

Hassan and Omar (2016) examined the effect of emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial attitude on entrepreneurial intention among students in a private college in Sabah, Malaysia. The study adopted a quantitative survey design, using structured questionnaires administered to 213 students. Findings revealed that trait emotional intelligence, conceptualized as emotional self-efficacy, was significantly related to both entrepreneurial attitude and entrepreneurial intention. The study also found that entrepreneurial attitude had a strong and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention, indicating its central role in shaping students' entrepreneurial decisions. The authors concluded that emotional intelligence is an important psychological resource that enhances entrepreneurial intention through its influence on attitude formation. The study recommended that entrepreneurship education should integrate emotional intelligence development to strengthen students' entrepreneurial mindset and intention.

Tanze et al. (2022) examined the impact of entrepreneurial skills on firm performance among listed manufacturing industries in Nigeria. The study focused on key entrepreneurial competencies such as resourcefulness, risk-taking, creativity, and leadership skills, and how they influence financial performance. Using a descriptive research design and stratified random sampling, primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that entrepreneurial skills significantly influence firm performance, with risk-taking, creativity, leadership, and resourcefulness all contributing positively to financial outcomes. The study concluded that entrepreneurial competencies are critical drivers of organizational success and recommended that firms and policymakers prioritize the development of entrepreneurial skills to enhance competitiveness and sustainability in Nigeria's manufacturing sector.

Uddin et al. (2025) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intentions among university students in Bangladesh. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 190 respondents and analyzed using multiple regression techniques in SPSS. The study examined key emotional intelligence dimensions including self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Findings revealed that while self-awareness had a negative influence on entrepreneurial intentions, other dimensions, particularly emotional regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, showed significant positive effects. The study concluded that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intention, emphasizing its importance in shaping entrepreneurial mindset among students.

Ngah and Salleh (2015) conducted a preliminary study on the relationship between emotional intelligence, innovativeness, and entrepreneurial success among young entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Using a pilot sample of 51 entrepreneurs, the study explored how emotional intelligence influences innovativeness as a pathway to entrepreneurial success. Findings indicated that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on innovativeness, which in turn enhances entrepreneurial success. However, among the emotional intelligence dimensions, regulation of emotions in others emerged as the most influential factor, while other components were less significant. The study also found no significant gender differences in emotional intelligence and innovativeness, although differences existed in entrepreneurial success. The authors concluded that emotional intelligence, particularly the ability to regulate emotions in others, plays a critical role in fostering innovativeness and improving entrepreneurial outcomes.

Makhanya (2024) conducted a systematic literature review on the influence of emotional intelligence on entrepreneurial resilience within the South African entrepreneurial sector. The review synthesized findings from 37 peer-reviewed studies published within the last decade, focusing on how emotional intelligence supports entrepreneurs in managing stress, building relationships, and adapting to challenging business environments. The study identified key themes showing that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are more resilient, better able to navigate socioeconomic constraints, and more capable of sustaining business performance in volatile conditions. It further emphasized that emotional regulation and self-awareness are critical competencies for entrepreneurial survival and success. The study concluded that emotional intelligence is a key determinant of entrepreneurial resilience and sustainability in South Africa, and recommended its integration into entrepreneurship education and training programmes.

Research Gaps

The reviewed literature demonstrates that emotional intelligence has attracted considerable scholarly attention as an important behavioural factor influencing entrepreneurial outcomes across different contexts. Existing studies consistently show that emotional intelligence enhances entrepreneurial intention, innovativeness, risk-taking behaviour, operational efficiency, leadership ability, and enterprise performance (Hassan & Omar, 2016; Umoh et al., 2020; Egbere & Omogbiya, 2022; Nsien & Oton, 2025). Scholars further emphasized that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are better able to regulate emotions, manage stress, build productive relationships, and cope with business uncertainties (Ezurike, 2024; Meize-Oscar, 2025).

Similarly, studies such as Makhanya (2024) established that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to entrepreneurial resilience by strengthening entrepreneurs' adaptive and coping capacities in challenging business environments. The literature also highlights the importance of entrepreneurship education and emotional intelligence training in enhancing entrepreneurial success and youth empowerment (Kuruku & Ngbea, 2018; Omezurike & Ogona, 2025).

Despite these valuable contributions, existing studies reveal important conceptual and contextual gaps. Most Nigerian studies focused primarily on entrepreneurial intention, innovativeness, risk-taking, firm performance, and entrepreneurial attitude, with limited empirical attention given to the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises. In addition, several studies concentrated on students, manufacturing firms, or general entrepreneurs rather than youth-owned enterprises operating within Nigeria's volatile business environment.

Furthermore, few studies specifically examined how emotional competencies enhance resilience capacities necessary for business survival and adaptation among young entrepreneurs. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by empirically examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria.

Hypotheses Development

Emotional intelligence has been widely recognized in organisational behaviour literature as a critical psychological capability that enhances individuals' ability to cope with uncertainty, stress, and environmental challenges. Among entrepreneurs, emotional intelligence facilitates adaptive behaviour, emotional stability, sound decision-making, and effective interpersonal relationships, all of which are essential for sustaining business activities in volatile environments.

Viewed from the point of view of youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria, emotional intelligence is expected to strengthen entrepreneurial resilience by enabling young entrepreneurs to withstand setbacks, recover from failures, and persist despite difficult business conditions.

Self-awareness, as a dimension of emotional intelligence, refers to the ability of individuals to recognize and understand their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and behavioural tendencies.

Entrepreneurs who possess high self-awareness are more capable of identifying their limitations, evaluating business situations objectively, and making informed decisions during periods of uncertainty. Self-aware entrepreneurs are also more likely to learn from failures and adapt their strategies to changing business conditions. Previous studies have shown that self-awareness contributes positively to entrepreneurial confidence, adaptability, and persistence. Therefore, self-awareness is expected to enhance entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: Self-awareness has no significant relationship with entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria.

Self-regulation is defined as the ability of individuals to control emotions, manage stress, and maintain emotional stability during difficult situations. As expected, entrepreneurs frequently encounter business pressures such as financial uncertainty, operational setbacks, and market instability, which require strong emotional control and coping mechanisms. Thus, entrepreneurs with high self-regulation are better able to remain calm, avoid impulsive decisions, and maintain focus during crises.

Alotaibi and Badawi (2023) have indicated that self-regulation enhances stress management, operational efficiency, and adaptive coping behaviour among entrepreneurs. Consequently, self-regulation is expected to significantly influence entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Self-regulation has no significant relationship with entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria.

Empathy involves the ability to understand, appreciate, and respond appropriately to the emotions and needs of others. In entrepreneurial activities, empathy promotes effective communication, relationship management, customer satisfaction, and stakeholder collaboration. Indeed, entrepreneurs who demonstrate empathy are more capable of building trust, maintaining social support networks, and sustaining productive business relationships that can assist them during periods of adversity.

Since social relationships and external support are important for entrepreneurial survival, empathy is expected to strengthen resilience among young entrepreneurs operating in challenging business environments.

Hypothesis Three: Empathy has no significant relationship with entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in Nigeria.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the collection of measurable data and the statistical testing of relationships among variables within a defined population at a single point in time.

The study area covered the six states in South-South Nigeria, namely Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States. The target population comprised youth-owned enterprise operators engaged in small and medium-scale businesses within the region, operating in a highly volatile and competitive economic environment.

Since there is no precise or up-to-date statistical record of the total number of youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria, the sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) sample size determination formula for large or unknown populations. This method is appropriate when the population is not clearly defined and ensures adequate statistical power for generalization.

Using a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and maximum variability ($p = 0.5$), the initial sample size was computed and adjusted for practical field considerations. Based on this, a final sample size of 384 respondents was adopted for the study. This figure is widely accepted in social science research for large and unknown populations and is considered sufficient to produce reliable and generalizable results. To ensure fair representation across the South-South states, a proportionate allocation technique was used to distribute the 384 questionnaires among the six states.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed in line with the study objectives. Emotional intelligence was operationalized using three dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, while entrepreneurial resilience served as the dependent variable. The instrument was adapted from validated scales in previous empirical studies and measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Entrepreneurship and Organizational behaviour. A pilot test was conducted, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, with all constructs exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70.

A multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive and simple random sampling was employed to select respondents from youth-owned enterprises across the region. Out of the 384 distributed questionnaires, responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), while multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS, and hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive Analysis

A total of 384 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, only 325 copies were completed and returned. On further investigation, 318 were found to be useful for the purpose of analysis. Thus, data were analysed using the 318 valid responses, which represent 82.81%.

Table 1

Gender Distribution of Respondents (n = 318)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	171	53.77
Female	147	46.23
Total	**318**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 2

Age Distribution of Respondents (n = 318)

Age Bracket (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–24	62	19.5
25–30	118	37.11
31–35	89	27.99
36–40	49	15.41
Total	**318**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 3

Descriptive Analysis of Self-Awareness (n = 318)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
SA1	I understand my strengths and weaknesses in business decisions	3.84	0.91	Agreed
SA2	I am aware of my emotional reactions during business challenges	3.76	0.88	Agreed
SA3	I recognize how my emotions affect my entrepreneurial decisions	3.69	0.94	Agreed
SA4	I reflect on my actions after business successes and failures	3.72	0.87	Agreed
SA5	I clearly understand my limits as a young entrepreneur	3.58	0.92	Agreed
Grand Mean		**3.718**		**Agreed**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4

Descriptive Analysis of Self-Regulation (n = 318)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
SR1	I remain calm when facing business difficulties	3.91	0.86	Agreed
SR2	I control my emotions when business is not going well	3.67	0.93	Agreed
SR3	I avoid making impulsive decisions during financial stress	3.74	0.89	Agreed
SR4	I manage pressure effectively in my business operations	3.81	0.9	Agreed
SR5	I stay focused even during setbacks in my enterprise	3.88	0.85	Agreed
Grand Mean		**3.802**		**Agreed**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 5

Descriptive Analysis of Empathy (n = 318)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
EM1	I understand the needs of my customers and clients	4.02	0.79	Agreed
EM2	I consider the feelings of employees/partners in decisions	3.79	0.88	Agreed
EM3	I maintain good relationships with business stakeholders	3.95	0.83	Agreed
EM4	I respond appropriately to complaints from customers	3.88	0.86	Agreed
EM5	I try to see situations from others' perspectives in business	3.74	0.91	Agreed
Grand Mean		**3.876**		**Agreed**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 6

Descriptive Analysis of Entrepreneurial Resilience (n = 318)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
ER1	I quickly recover from business setbacks	3.83	0.87	Agreed
ER2	I adapt easily to changes in the business environment	3.76	0.9	Agreed
ER3	I persist even when my business is facing difficulties	3.92	0.84	Agreed
ER4	I see challenges as opportunities for improvement	3.81	0.89	Agreed
ER5	I maintain motivation despite business failures	3.69	0.93	Agreed
ER6	I continue my business efforts despite repeated setbacks	3.88	0.86	Agreed
Grand Mean		**3.815**		**Agreed**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The descriptive results indicate that respondents generally agreed with all items measuring emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy) and entrepreneurial resilience. The grand means of all variables (ranging from 3.718 to 3.876) suggest that youth-owned enterprise operators in South-South Nigeria possess moderately high levels of emotional intelligence and demonstrate strong resilience behaviours in managing business challenges.

Inferential Analysis

The correlation results below how that all dimensions of emotional intelligence have a positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial resilience. Self-awareness ($r = 0.649$), self-regulation ($r = 0.701$), and empathy ($r = 0.678$) all exhibit strong positive associations with entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria. The strongest relationship is observed between self-regulation and entrepreneurial resilience, indicating that emotional control plays a major role in entrepreneurial adaptability and persistence.

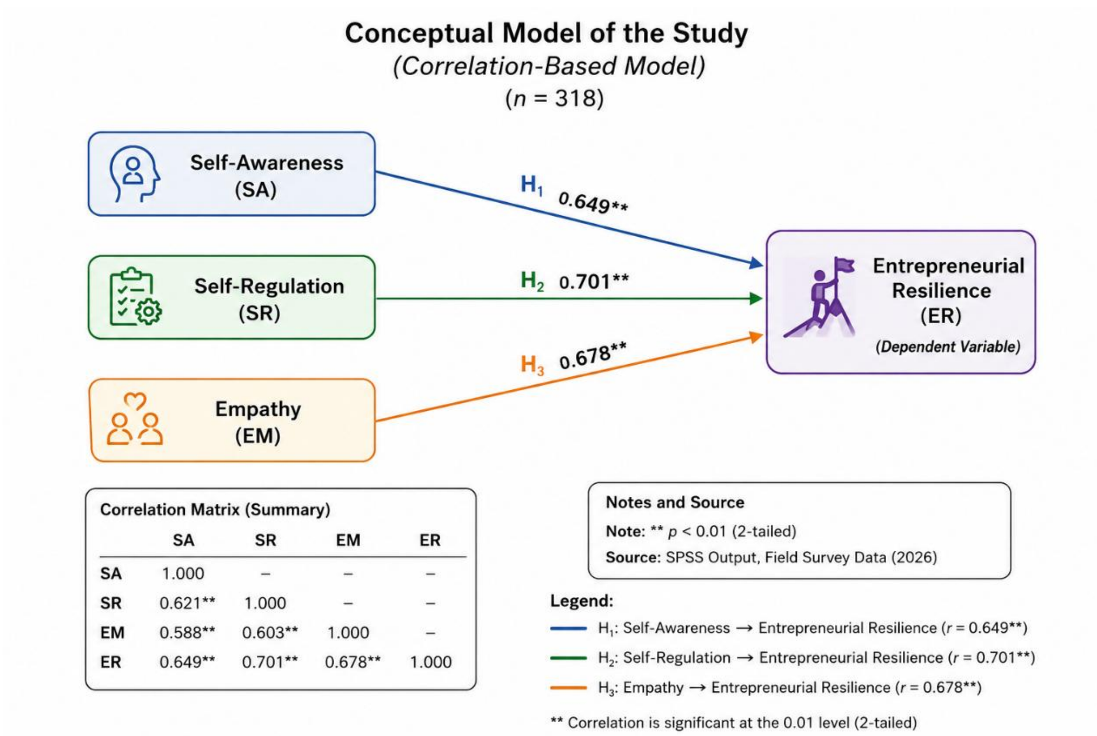

Table 7

Multiple Regression Analysis (n = 318)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	AdjustedR Square	Std. Error
1	0.782	0.612	0.607	0.42158

Source: SPSS Output, Field Survey Data (2026)

Table 8

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	118.462	3	39.487	222	0.000
Residual	75.071	314	0.239		
Total	**193.533**	**317**			

Source: SPSS Output, Field Survey Data (2026)

Table 9
Coefficients Table

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	0.842	0.173	—	4.87	0.000
Self-Awareness (SA)	0.214	0.041	0.231	5.22	0.000
Self-Regulation (SR)	0.318	0.039	0.352	8.15	0.000
Empathy (EM)	0.287	0.044	0.296	6.52	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, Field Survey Data (2026)

The regression results show that emotional intelligence dimensions significantly influence entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria. The model explains 61.2% of the variation in entrepreneurial resilience (R^2 = 0.612), while the F-statistic of 221.764 ($p = 0.000$) confirms overall model significance, indicating that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of resilience.

Individually, self-awareness ($\beta = 0.231$, $p = 0.000$), self-regulation ($\beta = 0.352$, $p = 0.000$), and empathy ($\beta = 0.296$, $p = 0.000$) all have significant positive effects on entrepreneurial resilience. Among them, self-regulation emerged as the strongest predictor, showing that emotional control and stress management are the most critical factors driving resilience in South-South Nigeria's youth-owned enterprises.

Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses testing revealed that all three dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy) have significant positive effects on entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria. Based on the decision rule ($p < 0.05$), all null hypotheses were rejected.

Specifically, self-awareness ($\beta = 0.231$, $p = 0.000$) significantly enhances entrepreneurs' ability to recognize personal strengths and weaknesses, thereby improving adaptability to business challenges. Self-regulation ($\beta = 0.352$, $p = 0.000$) emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that emotional control, stress management, and restraint from impulsive decisions are critical for sustaining business stability and recovery from setbacks. Empathy ($\beta = 0.296$, $p = 0.000$) also significantly influences entrepreneurial resilience by enabling entrepreneurs to build strong relationships with customers, employees, and stakeholders, which supports business continuity.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy significantly enhance entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria. The positive effect of self-awareness aligns with the emotional intelligence framework of Daniel Goleman, which emphasizes that individuals who understand their emotional strengths and limitations are better positioned to make adaptive decisions under pressure.

This finding is consistent with Umoh et al. (2020), who reported that self-awareness significantly enhances entrepreneurs' risk-taking capacity and decision-making effectiveness in Nigeria. It also supports Hassan and Omar (2016), who found that emotional self-awareness improves entrepreneurial attitude and intention, thereby strengthening behavioural adaptability in uncertain environments.

The result on self-regulation as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial resilience is consistent with prior empirical evidence and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains that individuals who effectively regulate emotional responses are more capable of managing stress and recovering from adversity.

Meize-Oscar (2025) similarly found that self-regulation significantly improves operational efficiency and adaptive coping among MSME operators in Nigeria. Likewise, Nsien and Oton (2025) established that emotional regulation strongly predicts entrepreneurial risk-taking behaviour, reinforcing the importance of emotional control in sustaining business performance under uncertainty.

The significant influence of empathy on entrepreneurial resilience supports the social dimension of emotional intelligence proposed by Mayer and Salovey (1997), which highlights the role of understanding others' emotions in building effective interpersonal relationships. This finding is consistent with Egbere and Omogbiya (2022), who reported that social intelligence and empathy significantly enhance entrepreneurial innovativeness among SMEs in Nigeria. It also aligns with Ngah and Salleh (2015), who found that emotional regulation of others' emotions fosters innovativeness and entrepreneurial success. Overall, the findings confirm that emotional intelligence is a critical psychological resource for entrepreneurial resilience in volatile environments.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience among youth-owned enterprises in South-South Nigeria. The findings revealed that self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy significantly and positively influence entrepreneurial resilience. Self-regulation emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that emotional control and stress management are critical for business survival in volatile environments.

Self-awareness and empathy also contributed meaningfully by enhancing decision-making and stakeholder relationships. Indeed, the study confirms that emotional intelligence is a vital psychological resource for entrepreneurial success. It concludes that strengthening emotional competencies among young entrepreneurs can significantly improve their ability to adapt, survive, and sustain their enterprises.

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

i. Entrepreneurship development agencies and government programmes should organize regular self-awareness training workshops for young entrepreneurs to help them better understand their emotional strengths, weaknesses, and decision-making patterns for improved business adaptability.

ii. Business support institutions should introduce stress management and emotional control modules in entrepreneurship training programmes to help youth entrepreneurs manage pressure, avoid impulsive decisions, and remain resilient during financial and operational challenges.

iii. Youth entrepreneurship hubs and incubators should encourage mentorship and customer-relationship training that fosters empathy, enabling entrepreneurs to better understand stakeholder needs, improve relationships, and build sustainable business networks.

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