



Effects of emotional intelligence on entrepreneurial intention and self-efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Past studies associated emotional intelligence with positive workplace outcomes, such as job performance and job satisfaction. However, to date, the relationship between emotional intelligence and individual differences in entrepreneurship has been scarcely examined. In this study, the contribution of emotional intelligence dimensions to entrepreneurial potential is explored, controlling for the influence of personality traits and demographic variables. Using a sample of 394 participants, it has been tested, by means of multiple hierarchical regression analyses, the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions and the intention to become entrepreneur. Results indicate that two dimensions of emotional intelligence, regulation and utilization of emotions, positively affect entrepreneurial self-efficacy. In turn, the perception of self-efficacy mediates the relation between emotional intelligence and the intention to become an entrepreneur.

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Efectos de la inteligencia emocional sobre la intención y la autoeficacia emprendedora

RESUMEN

Estudios previos relacionan la inteligencia emocional con resultados positivos en el puesto de trabajo, tales como el desempeño y la satisfacción laboral. Sin embargo, la relación entre la inteligencia emocional y las diferencias individuales en emprendimiento han sido escasamente examinadas. En el presente estudio se analiza el efecto de las dimensiones de la inteligencia emocional sobre el potencial emprendedor, tras controlar la influencia de los rasgos de personalidad y variables demográficas. Concretamente, con una muestra de 394 participantes, por medio de análisis de regresión jerárquica, se pone a prueba el rol mediador de la auto-eficacia emprendedora en la relación entre las dimensiones de la inteligencia emocional y la intención de llegar a ser un emprendedor. Los resultados indican que dos dimensiones de la inteligencia emocional, la regulación y la utilización de emociones, afectan positivamente a la auto-eficacia emprendedora. Además, la percepción de auto-eficacia media la relación entre la inteligencia emocional y la intención de ser un emprendedor.

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Palabras clave:

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Rasgos de personalidad

In the last years, emotional intelligence has become a major topic of interest in scientific circles as well as in the lay public (Bar-On, 2006). The term *emotional intelligence* (EI) refers to the mental processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding, and management of one's own and others' emotional states to solve problems and regulate behaviour (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Researchers analyzed the relationships between EI and different socio-psychological variables (Extremera, Fernández-Berrocal,

Mestre, & Guil, 2004). A relevant amount of research suggest that EI leads to better social relations and mental and physical well-being (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008), and predicts job satisfaction and job performance (O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, & Story, 2011). Nevertheless, despite the increasing interest on EI as a key factor for career success, to date little research has analyzed the relationship between EI and individual differences in entrepreneurship (Ahmetoglu, Leutner, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011; Zampetakis, Beldekos, & Moustakis, 2009).

In this context, the aim of the present study is to analyze the relationships between the EI dimensions (appraisal and expression of emotions, regulation of emotions, and utilization of emotions) and entrepreneurial intention mediated by entrepreneurial self-efficacy,

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controlling the influence of Big Five personality factors and demographic variables (age, gender and, country).

Emotional Intelligence

In the scientific psychological literature EI was introduced by Salovey and Mayer, in 1990, and popularized by Goleman (1995), with his best-seller "Emotional Intelligence". Over the years, several researchers have provided definitions of EI (e.g., Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995). The most widespread in the academic world is given by Salovey and Mayer (1990). In 1990 they first defined EI as a type of social and personal intelligence involving "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (op. cit., p. 189). In 1997 they refined this definition by including four interrelated dimensions: perception, appraisal, and expression of emotions; emotion facilitation of thinking; understanding and analyzing emotional information, employing emotional knowledge; and regulation of emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). As Cartwright and Pappas (2008) noticed, they remain committed to the idea that "EI lies at the intersection between mental processing of emotional information and its integration with cognitive information" (op. cit., p.154).

In the current scientific literature, different approaches to the construct can be found, the specific-ability approach, the integrative approach, and the mixed model, which are somehow compelling and complementary (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006).

The specific-ability approach focus on particular skills and capabilities important for EI (Mayer et al., 2008). The principal abilities identified by the authors are: *emotional perception and identification*; *the use of emotional information in thinking, reasoning about emotions*, in particular the appraisal, classification, categorization of emotions and language abilities to communicate these emotions; last but not least, the *emotion management* in self and in others, through which one is able to engage, prolong or detach from an emotional state, monitor and reflect on feelings, and reframe the perception of certain situations (Cartwright & Pappas, 2008; Mayer, et al., 2008).

The specific-abilities identified by the authors reflect the four-branch model developed by Mayer and Salovey (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It is an integrative approach, as they join each area to have an overall EI. Each area is viewed as developed from early childhood onward (Mayer et al., 2008). Moreover, these four branches are hierarchically organized: perception of emotion is at the basic level, and emotion management is at the highest and most complex level, so the regulation of one's and other's emotion is built on the basis of the competencies of the three other branches (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006).

Another approach to EI is the Mixed-Model, so called because it targets mixed qualities. It has been proposed by Bar-On (1997), who defined EI as an "array of non cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 14). Cartwright and Pappas (2008) noticed that this model, similarly to Goleman's, included five broad categories: *intrapersonal emotion skills*, *interpersonal emotion skills*, *adaptability*, *stress management*, and *general mood*.

Emotional intelligence have often been associated with important life outcomes, such as better psychological well-being (Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2007), high-quality social relationships (Lopes et al., 2004), and increased career success. Indeed, results of previous studies showed that EI predicts work performance (O'Boyle et al., 2011), job satisfaction, work commitment, and job involvement (Carmeli, 2003). Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey (2006) investigated the relation between emotional intelligence and positive workplace outcomes. They found that the

overall EI was significantly related to several indicators of work performance, to ratings of interpersonal facilitation, to affect, and to attitudes. In line with these findings, a previous longitudinal study (Snarey & Vaillant, 1985) found that work performance was influenced more by individuals' abilities to cope and manage emotions, handle stress and frustration, and get along with other people, than by IQ. Accordingly, it is possible to infer that EI is an important predictor of significant outcomes across different samples in a number of real-world domains.

The above mentioned studies focus on some outcomes that EI can predict, but there are other outcomes it could envisage. Recently, some authors argue that EI could have an important role in the prediction of entrepreneurship (e.g., Ahmetoglu et al., 2011; Chell, 2008; Zampetakis et al., 2009).

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the major source of employment, economic growth, innovation, promotion of products and service quality, competition, and economical flexibility of today's society (Hisrich, Langan-Fox, & Grant, 2007). It is a multi-dimensional concept that occurs in different contexts (economic, technological, managerial, laboural) and in all types of organizations. Chell (2007) defined entrepreneurship as "the process of recognising and pursuing opportunities with regard to alienable and inalienable resources currently controlled with a view to value creation" (p. 18). Entrepreneurship is about people, their choices and actions in starting, taking over or running a business, or their involvement in a company's strategic decision-making.

Today's working environment undergoes too big and complex changes, mainly due to various socioeconomic and psychosocial factors which push the labor market towards knowledge-based activities. The labor market is evolving through the removal of barriers and through mutual recognition and harmonization. These have led to opportunities for new entrepreneurial initiative, making self-employment an important way of professional development. Entrepreneurship contributes to job creation and economic growth, boosts productivity, and increases competitive pressure, pushing companies to react by improving efficiency and/or introducing innovation. Moreover, it unlocks personal potential, as work is not only for money. Self-actualization, satisfaction, and taste for independence are important motivators too (European Commission, 2003). Accordingly, entrepreneurship play a positive role in delivering wealth, jobs, diversity of choice, and personal development.

In psychology, researchers have focused primarily on the analysis of the antecedents of entrepreneurial behavior and entrepreneurial potential. In this context, a great number of studies have explored the association between the Big Five personality traits and entrepreneurial behavior, and the intent to undertake this process. Recently, Brandstätter (2011) summarized five meta-analyses (Rauch & Frese, 2007; Stewart & Roth, 2001; Stewart & Roth, 2007; Zhao & Seibert, 2006; Zhao et al., 2010), comprehensive of the main studies on personality aspects of entrepreneurship. The results of these meta-analyses suggest that personality traits contribute substantially to the way entrepreneurs think, what they aim for, what they do, and what they actually achieve. Given that entrepreneurial intentions and behavior depend on individual differences, researchers are questioning the extent to which emotional intelligence can be a significant predictor of those. Next, the results of research investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship carried out so far are described.

Emotional Intelligence and Entrepreneurship

Although currently researchers dedicate a lot of attention to the concept of entrepreneurship and its process, as well as to the concept

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