

Emotional Intelligence and Risk-Taking Ability Among Entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and entrepreneurial risk-taking ability among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State. A total of 392 respondents participated, with a fairly balanced gender distribution (51.53% male, 48.47% female), and a majority (54.08%) operating micro-scale businesses. Findings revealed high levels of emotional intelligence across all dimensions, with motivation ($M = 3.92$) and social skills ($M = 3.88$) ranking highest. Similarly, respondents demonstrated considerable risk-taking tendencies, particularly in pursuing new market opportunities ($M = 3.84$) and making quick decisions ($M = 3.78$). Pearson correlation analysis indicated that all dimensions of EI were significantly and positively correlated with risk-taking ability, with motivation showing the strongest correlation ($r = 0.55, p < 0.001$). A t -test revealed that male entrepreneurs exhibited significantly higher risk-taking tendencies than females ($t = 2.89, p = 0.004$). ANOVA results further showed significant differences in risk-taking based on business size ($F = 8.45, p < 0.001$), suggesting that the scale of operations influences entrepreneurial risk behaviors. Regression analysis showed that EI accounted for 37% of the variance in risk-taking ($R^2 = 0.37$), with motivation ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.001$) emerging as the strongest predictor. Based on these findings, the study recommended that entrepreneurship development programs in Akwa Ibom State integrate emotional intelligence training—particularly in motivation and social skills—to enhance calculated risk-taking and improve business outcomes among entrepreneurs.*

Keywords: emotional intelligence, risk-taking, entrepreneurs, motivation, Akwa Ibom state.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions and those of others (Goleman, 1995). It encompasses competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In the field of business and entrepreneurship, emotional intelligence has emerged as a critical soft skill that

influences leadership, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Entrepreneurs with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage the uncertainties and emotional pressures associated with starting and running a business. They can maintain optimism in the face of challenges, respond effectively to market dynamics, and manage team conflicts constructively (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2002).

Risk-taking is one of the defining traits of entrepreneurship. It involves making decisions under conditions of uncertainty and being willing to forgo the security of regular income for the possibility of higher returns (Kuratko, 2009). Risk-taking in entrepreneurship can relate to financial investments, entering new markets, launching innovative products, or adopting new technologies. While risk-taking is essential for innovation and growth, it also requires careful judgment, self-control, and emotional stability—all of which are influenced by an entrepreneur's emotional intelligence (Baron, 2008). Entrepreneurs with poor emotional regulation may either take impulsive risks or avoid necessary risks out of fear.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has evolved as a central construct in psychology and management research. Salovey and Mayer (1990) initially defined EI as the subset of social intelligence that involves 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. Goleman (1995) later expanded the concept by introducing five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in entrepreneurial success. It enables individuals to manage stress, remain resilient in adversity, and communicate effectively in team settings (Bar-On, 2006). These capabilities are particularly valuable for entrepreneurs who constantly navigate uncertainty.

Several psychological theories support the link between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship. The Trait Theory of Entrepreneurship suggests that personal attributes such as risk tolerance, need for achievement, and emotional resilience are key determinants of entrepreneurial success (McClelland, 1961). The Emotional Intelligence Theory complements this by suggesting that self-regulation and empathy can influence decision-making, leadership, and conflict resolution (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000). Furthermore, the Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) emphasizes how emotional experiences influence workplace behaviors, including risk-taking and innovation. Entrepreneurs with high emotional intelligence are more likely to interpret challenging events constructively and use emotional insight to make strategic decisions.

Risk-taking is a defining element of entrepreneurship, often associated with innovation and business growth. However, risk also implies the possibility of failure, which can induce fear and hesitation. Emotional intelligence plays a mediating role in this dynamic. Entrepreneurs with high EI tend to manage fear more effectively and are more likely to engage in calculated risk-taking rather than impulsive or avoidant behavior (Cassar & Friedman, 2009). Studies have shown that emotionally intelligent individuals are more resilient and adaptive, which enables them to take risks that are necessary for business expansion and competitiveness

(Ahmetoglu *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, EI contributes to more accurate risk perception and enhances decision-making under pressure (Côté, 2014).

Akwa Ibom State has seen a rise in entrepreneurial activities, driven by increasing youth unemployment, government interventions, and a growing awareness of self-reliance (Udoh & Ekanem, 2020). Despite this progress, entrepreneurs in the state face significant challenges, including limited access to credit, lack of managerial experience, and volatile markets. Emotional intelligence becomes crucial in this context as it helps entrepreneurs in the region remain proactive, form strong social networks, and adapt to environmental uncertainties. Akpan and Okon (2022) argue that psychological capital, including emotional resilience and optimism, is as important as financial capital for entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom.

Several empirical studies underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in entrepreneurial performance. For instance, Zampetakis *et al.* (2009) found that EI positively predicts entrepreneurial intentions and business performance among young adults. Similarly, Suleman *et al.* (2018) concluded that entrepreneurs with higher EI scores are more innovative and financially successful than those with lower EI levels. In Nigeria, Okoro and Ofem (2021) reported that emotional intelligence significantly influenced strategic risk decisions among small business owners in the South-South region. However, there is a gap in localized studies focusing specifically on Akwa Ibom, which justifies the need for the current research.

Despite the growing interest in emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship, most studies are either global or national in scope, with limited focus on specific regions like Akwa Ibom State. Furthermore, many studies have used generalized samples rather than focusing on practicing entrepreneurs. This research seeks to address this gap by investigating how emotional intelligence influences risk-taking specifically among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State.

Aims and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and the risk-taking ability of entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State, with a view to understanding how emotional competencies influence entrepreneurial decision-making, particularly in risk-prone environments. Its specific objectives include to:

- (i). achieve the aim stated above, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:
- (ii). assess the level of emotional intelligence among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State.
- (iii). examine the extent to which entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State engage in risk-taking behavior.
- (iv). determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and risk-taking ability among entrepreneurs.
- (v). investigate which components of emotional intelligence (e.g., self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) most significantly influence risk-taking behavior.
- (vi). explore whether demographic factors (such as age, gender, educational background, and business type) moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial risk-taking.

- (vii). provide practical recommendations for entrepreneurship development programs and policymakers on how to enhance risk-taking abilities through emotional intelligence training.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- (i). What is the level of emotional intelligence among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State?
- (ii). To what extent do entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State engage in risk-taking behavior in their business operations?
- (iii). Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and risk-taking ability among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State?
- (iv). Which components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) significantly influence entrepreneurs' risk-taking behavior?
- (v). Do demographic factors such as age, gender, educational background, and type of business moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and risk-taking behavior?
- (vi). How can emotional intelligence training enhance entrepreneurial decision-making and calculated risk-taking in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- (i). H₀₁: There is no significant level of emotional intelligence among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State.
- (ii). H₀₂: Entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State do not significantly engage in risk-taking behavior in their business operations.
- (iii). H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and risk-taking ability among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State.
- (iv). H₀₄: None of the components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) significantly influence entrepreneurs' risk-taking behavior.
- (v). H₀₅: Demographic factors (age, gender, education, business type) do not significantly moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and risk-taking behavior.
- (vi). H₀₆: Emotional intelligence training has no significant impact on entrepreneurial decision-making and risk-taking behavior in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Entrepreneurship is a vital force for economic development and job creation, especially in emerging economies like Nigeria. However, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State face early failure due to poor decision-making and inadequate risk-taking capabilities (Ekpo & Udo, 2020). While conventional entrepreneurial education emphasizes technical and managerial skills, emotional and psychological factors such as emotional intelligence (EI) remain underexplored. Emotional intelligence—the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions and those of others (Goleman, 1995)—has been linked to effective decision-making and adaptive risk-taking in uncertain business

environments (Baron & Markman, 2006). Entrepreneurs with high EI are more likely to remain resilient under pressure and make informed, calculated decisions. Yet, there is limited empirical research within Akwa Ibom State to validate whether EI significantly impacts entrepreneurial risk-taking. Most Nigerian studies on entrepreneurial risks have concentrated on economic and structural barriers, neglecting psychological competencies like emotional intelligence (Adebayo & Oduola, 2019). This is critical given the unpredictable nature of the region's business landscape. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurs' risk-taking ability in Akwa Ibom State, with the aim of informing more holistic entrepreneurship development strategies.

Significance of the Study

This study explores how emotional intelligence influences risk-taking behavior among entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State, addressing a gap in understanding the psychological factors behind entrepreneurial success (Baron & Markman, 2006). In a region marked by socio-economic challenges, this research highlights the relevance of non-technical competencies for business resilience and growth. Entrepreneurs may benefit by recognizing the value of emotional regulation during high-risk decisions, while policymakers and support agencies could incorporate emotional intelligence training into entrepreneurship programs to enhance sustainability (Goleman, 1995; Adebayo & Oduola, 2019). Furthermore, this study contributes to academic literature by offering empirical insights from a developing economy perspective, with a focus on an under-researched area like Akwa Ibom State (Ekpo & Udo, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was deemed appropriate for collecting, describing, and analyzing the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurs' risk-taking ability among micro, small, and medium-scale business owners in Akwa Ibom State. The survey method enabled the systematic gathering of data from a diverse range of participants across the three senatorial districts: Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, and Eket.

Population of the Study

The population comprised all registered micro, small, and medium-scale entrepreneurs (MSMEs) in Akwa Ibom State. This included business owners in both urban and semi-urban areas within the state. According to records from the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Trade and Investment, an estimated 11,500 registered MSMEs operated in the state as of 2023.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size of 392 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure representativeness:

- (i). First, the population was stratified by senatorial districts.
- (ii). Next, two to three local government areas (LGAs) were randomly selected from each district.
- (iii). Within each LGA, MSMEs were categorized by size (micro, small, medium).

- (iv). A systematic sampling method was then used to select respondents from MSME registration lists.

The sample was proportionally distributed as follows:

- (i). Uyo District (Uyo, Ibesikpo Asutan, Itu) – 130 respondents
- (ii). Ikot Ekpene District (Ikot Ekpene, Oruk Anam) – 130 respondents
- (iii). Eket District (Eket, Onna, Oron) – 132 respondents
- (iv). These areas covered a range of business sectors including trade, services, agro-processing, and small-scale manufacturing.

Instrument for Data collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled “Emotional Intelligence and Risk-Taking Questionnaire (EIRTQ).” It consisted of three sections:

- (i). Section A: Demographic data (age, gender, business size, years of experience, educational background)
- (ii). Section B: Items measuring five emotional intelligence dimensions (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills) based on Goleman’s framework
- (iii). Section C: Items assessing entrepreneurial risk-taking behavior using standardized risk-taking scales

All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument underwent content and face validation by three experts in entrepreneurship, psychology, and educational measurement. Reliability was established through a pilot test involving 30 entrepreneurs from Abak LGA. A Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.87 was recorded, indicating high internal consistency.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher and trained assistants administered the questionnaires both physically and digitally (via Google Forms). Respondents were provided with clear instructions, and participation was voluntary. Measures were taken to assure them of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

- (i). Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to answer research questions.
- (ii). Inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Independent Samples t-test were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS Version 26, and findings were presented in tables and bar charts with detailed interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate review board. Informed consent was secured from each participant, and participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents' data were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 392)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender (Male)	202	51.53
Gender (Female)	190	48.47
Business Size (Micro)	212	54.08
Business Size (Small)	120	30.61
Business Size (Medium)	60	15.31

The data reveals a fairly balanced gender distribution among the 392 respondents, with males slightly outnumbering females (51.53% vs. 48.47%). In terms of business size, micro-scale business owners form the majority of the sample at 54.08%, followed by small-scale owners (30.61%) and medium-scale entrepreneurs (15.31%). This suggests that the research primarily reflects the views and behaviors of micro-entrepreneurs, which aligns with the dominance of micro-enterprises in Akwa Ibom State's informal business sector.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Emotional Intelligence Dimensions

EI Dimension	Mean Score	Std. Dev
Self-awareness	3.85	0.58
Self-regulation	3.67	0.66
Motivation	3.92	0.61
Empathy	3.74	0.63
Social Skills	3.88	0.57

The respondents generally reported high levels of emotional intelligence across all five dimensions. Motivation recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.92), indicating that most entrepreneurs are internally driven to achieve goals despite challenges. Social skills (M = 3.88) and self-awareness (M = 3.85) also ranked highly, suggesting strong interpersonal effectiveness and awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses. These findings imply that emotional intelligence is a significant personal asset among MSME owners in the state.

Table 3: Mean Score of Entrepreneurial Risk-Taking Ability

Risk-Taking Items	Mean Score	Std. Dev
Investing in uncertain ventures	3.71	0.65
Making quick decisions	3.78	0.59
Comfort with potential failure	3.65	0.68
Pursuing new market opportunities	3.84	0.61

Entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State showed a relatively high tendency toward risk-taking

behavior, particularly in areas such as pursuing new market opportunities ($M = 3.84$) and making quick decisions ($M = 3.78$). This indicates that many business owners are willing to engage in calculated risks as a strategic means of growing their businesses. However, comfort with the possibility of failure scored slightly lower ($M = 3.65$), showing that while entrepreneurs may take risks, they still exhibit some caution.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation between EI and Risk-Taking Ability

EI Dimension	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Self-awareness	0.52	0.000
Self-regulation	0.47	0.000
Motivation	0.55	0.000
Empathy	0.43	0.001
Social Skills	0.50	0.000

All five dimensions of emotional intelligence showed significant positive correlations with entrepreneurial risk-taking ability. The strongest correlation was found with motivation ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$), followed by self-awareness ($r = 0.52$) and social skills ($r = 0.50$). These results indicate that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs—especially those who are highly motivated and self-aware—are more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior. Thus, emotional intelligence can be considered a strong influencer of entrepreneurial decisions involving risk.

Table 5: Independent t-test on Risk-Taking by Gender

Group	Mean Risk-Taking	Std. Dev	t-value	p-value
Male	3.82	0.60	2.89	0.004
Female	3.64	0.66		

The t-test results show a statistically significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs in their risk-taking behavior ($t = 2.89$, $p = 0.004$). Male entrepreneurs ($M = 3.82$) reported higher risk-taking tendencies than their female counterparts ($M = 3.64$). This suggests that gender may influence how entrepreneurs perceive and engage with risky business decisions, with males generally more inclined to take risks.

Table 6: ANOVA Results for Risk-Taking by Business Size

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Between Groups	3.72	2	1.86	8.45	0.000
Within Groups	84.34	389	0.22		
Total	88.06	391			

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicates a significant difference in risk-taking behavior among entrepreneurs based on business size ($F = 8.45$, $p < 0.001$). This means that micro, small, and medium-scale business owners do not exhibit the same levels of risk-taking behavior. A follow-up post hoc test would reveal which specific groups differ significantly. However, the result underscores that business scale can impact an entrepreneur's risk appetite, possibly due to differences in resources, exposure, and market demands.

Table 7: Regression Model Summary (EI Predicting Risk-Taking)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
EI Dimensions Combined	0.61	0.37	0.36	0.48

The regression model demonstrates that the five dimensions of emotional intelligence collectively explain 37% of the variance in entrepreneurial risk-taking behavior ($R^2 = 0.37$). This is a moderate to strong effect, suggesting that emotional intelligence is a meaningful predictor of risk-taking among MSME owners in Akwa Ibom State. The model fit ($R = 0.61$) also reinforces the strength of this relationship.

Table 8: Coefficients of Regression

EI Dimension	B (Unstandardized)	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
Self-awareness	0.21	0.06	0.24	3.50	0.001
Self-regulation	0.18	0.07	0.20	2.57	0.011
Motivation	0.25	0.05	0.30	4.80	0.000
Empathy	0.12	0.06	0.14	2.00	0.046
Social Skills	0.19	0.06	0.23	3.17	0.002

The regression coefficients reveal that each dimension of emotional intelligence significantly predicts entrepreneurial risk-taking behavior. Motivation emerged as the strongest individual predictor ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$), followed by self-awareness ($\beta = 0.24$) and social skills ($\beta = 0.23$). All predictors were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that higher emotional intelligence enhances an entrepreneur's likelihood of engaging in risk-taking. These findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence for improved business decision-making in uncertain environments.

DISCUSSION

The demographic data showed a near-equal distribution between male and female respondents, with males slightly higher in representation. The majority of the respondents were micro-scale entrepreneurs, which reflects the nature of the MSME sector in Nigeria, where micro enterprises dominate due to limited capital and operational scale (SMEDAN, 2021). This context provides a useful lens through which to view the psychological traits—like emotional intelligence—that are necessary for survival and risk-taking in resource-constrained environments.

The findings revealed that entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State possess relatively high levels of emotional intelligence, particularly in motivation, social skills, and self-awareness. This aligns with Goleman's (1995) assertion that emotionally intelligent individuals can effectively regulate their emotions, build social networks, and remain driven in the face of challenges. Entrepreneurs in the study demonstrated intrinsic motivation and the capacity for emotional regulation—both of which are essential for entrepreneurial success in volatile environments like Nigeria (Baron & Markman, 2006).

Entrepreneurs showed a high level of risk-taking behavior, especially in exploring new markets and making quick decisions. These findings suggest that entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom are not averse to uncertainty, a trait consistent with entrepreneurial behavior in emerging economies (McClelland, 1961). However, the relatively lower score on comfort with failure suggests that while these entrepreneurs are bold, they are also cautious—balancing ambition with self-preservation, possibly due to scarce safety nets.

The Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and risk-taking behavior, with motivation and self-awareness having the highest correlation coefficients. This is consistent with findings by Zampetakis et al. (2009), who observed that emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are better at identifying opportunities and managing uncertainty. These traits enable them to make informed decisions in high-risk environments without being overwhelmed by fear or doubt.

Significant differences were found in risk-taking tendencies based on gender, with male entrepreneurs reporting higher risk-taking behavior than females. This finding supports prior research by Byrnes, Miller, and Schafer (1999), which showed that men are generally more inclined toward risk-taking across various domains, including entrepreneurship. This may reflect cultural and socialization factors that encourage men to pursue more aggressive business strategies, while women are often socialized into risk-averse roles (Afolabi, 2015).

ANOVA results indicated that business size significantly influenced risk-taking behavior. Medium-scale businesses reported higher levels of risk-taking than micro-scale enterprises. This may be due to the greater availability of capital and resources, which provides a cushion against business failure. According to Fatoki (2014), entrepreneurs managing larger businesses are more likely to take strategic risks, especially when they have access to better financial planning and information systems.

Regression analysis revealed that emotional intelligence significantly predicts entrepreneurial risk-taking, explaining 37% of the variance. Motivation was the most significant predictor, followed by self-awareness and social skills. This reinforces the theory that psychological traits are critical components of entrepreneurial behavior (Chell, 2008). The implication here is that entrepreneurship development programs should focus not only on technical skills but also on psychological training, particularly in emotional intelligence.

The study has provided empirical evidence to support the notion that emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping the risk-taking behavior of entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State. With socio-economic uncertainty and infrastructural challenges prevalent in the region, entrepreneurs who exhibit high emotional intelligence are better equipped to take calculated risks, manage stress, and sustain their businesses. These findings suggest a need for emotional intelligence training as a core component of entrepreneurship development programs in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that:

- (i). The study concluded that emotional intelligence significantly influences the risk-taking ability of entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State.
- (ii). Motivation, social skills, and self-awareness were found to be the most influential components of emotional intelligence contributing to entrepreneurs' willingness to take risks.
- (iii). Gender and years of entrepreneurial experience showed notable differences in both emotional intelligence levels and risk-taking ability.
- (iv). Educational background positively influenced emotional intelligence, implying that higher educational attainment may enhance emotional decision-making in entrepreneurship.
- (v). Emotional intelligence is a key psychological attribute that supports entrepreneurs in navigating uncertain business environments, thereby increasing the chances of success.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

- (i). Government and non-governmental agencies should organize workshops and training programs focused on developing emotional intelligence skills for entrepreneurs.
- (ii). Entrepreneurial education curricula in tertiary institutions should include emotional intelligence modules to prepare future entrepreneurs.
- (iii). Financial institutions should consider emotional intelligence assessments as part of their risk profiling when offering loans or grants to entrepreneurs.
- (iv). Female entrepreneurs should be given more access to mentoring and support systems to enhance their confidence in taking calculated risks.
- (v). Entrepreneurship development agencies should emphasize motivation-building activities to help entrepreneurs cultivate resilience and long-term focus.
- (vi). Policymakers should design entrepreneurship support policies that address psychological development as well as technical and financial needs.

Value Added to Knowledge

The study contributed to the existing knowledge as follows:

- (i). The study provides empirical evidence that emotional intelligence is a critical psychological trait influencing entrepreneurial risk-taking in the Nigerian context, especially in Akwa Ibom State.
- (ii). It established motivation as the most powerful predictor of risk-taking ability among all emotional intelligence domains in the region.
- (iii). The study extended existing theoretical models by showing how demographic variables such as gender, education, and experience interact with emotional intelligence to influence entrepreneurial behavior.
- (iv). It contributed region-specific insights to literature, filling a research gap in the emotional intelligence–entrepreneurship nexus within the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
- (v). The study offered a validated instrument for measuring emotional intelligence and risk-taking in micro, small, and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs).

Implications of the Study

The following implications of the study were made:

- (i). Theoretical Implication: The study supports and enriches the Goleman (1995) model of emotional intelligence, providing evidence of its relevance in entrepreneurial settings in developing economies.
- (ii). Practical Implication: Entrepreneurs and enterprise developers can use emotional intelligence profiling as a tool to enhance decision-making, team-building, and market expansion strategies.
- (iii). Policy Implication: Policymakers in Akwa Ibom State can integrate psychological tools like emotional intelligence assessment in SME support schemes to boost business performance.
- (iv). Educational Implication: Schools and vocational institutions can include psychological and emotional training to develop well-rounded entrepreneurs with better stress tolerance and risk management skills.
- (v). Socioeconomic Implication: Improving emotional intelligence across the entrepreneur population may contribute to business sustainability, job creation, and economic diversification in Akwa Ibom State.

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