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ISTANBUL GELISIM UNIVERSITY
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Department of Business Administration

**THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC THINKING BETWEEN
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND FIRM
ENTREPRENEURSHIP ORIENTATION**

Master Thesis

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Turkish Abstract : Girişimcilik, ülkelerin ekonomik gücünde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu çalışma, liderlerin duygusal zekası, stratejik düşünme ve girişimcilik yönelimi arasındaki ilişkileri incelemiştir. İstanbul'daki 376 işletme yöneticisinden toplanan veriler, SmartPLS 4.0 kullanılarak yapısal eşitlik modellemesiyle analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, stratejik düşünmenin, liderlerin duygusal zekası ile firmaların girişimcilik yönelimi arasında tam aracılık etkisi gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Duygusal zekanın girişimcilik yönelimi üzerindeki doğrudan etkisi tespit edilmezken, stratejik düşünmenin kritik bir bağlantı olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Bu bulgular, girişimcilik başarısını artırmak için stratejik düşünmenin

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other persons have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

Güneş VAHAPOĞLU

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SUMMARY

Entrepreneurship is one of the most important factors for countries to be economically resilient. Successful continuation of the entrepreneurial journey, which involves high uncertainty and intense working conditions, requires the effective management of emotional factors and strategic thinking that is becoming more and more relevant as the leadership style in an organization. The study specifically attempted to evaluate the role of strategic thinking in mediating the interaction between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial orientation, to provide a full picture of how these cognitive and emotional abilities interact in the workplace. The questionnaire was employed as a means of electronically collecting data from the study sample. Of the 400 questionnaires collected, 34 were eliminated to be unsatisfactorily complete and were therefore rejected.

The approved study sample consisted of 376 business managers in Istanbul. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was utilized due to its ability to handle non-normal data distributions, its effectiveness with small sample sizes, its capacity to analyze formative variables, and its suitability for complex models using SmartPls 4.0. Results revealed that leaders' emotional intelligence has a relationship with their strategic thinking and leaders' strategic thinking has a relationship with the firm's entrepreneurship orientation. The findings did not show empirical evidence that proves leaders' emotional intelligence has a relationship with the firm's entrepreneurship orientation. However, it was discovered that strategic thinking has a full mediating effect between the emotional intelligence of the leaders and firms' entrepreneurship orientation. This emphasises the critical importance of strategic thinking as a link between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial success. This shows that, while emotional intelligence is crucial, it must be combined with strategic thinking to develop entrepreneurial behaviour effectively. Based on these results, it can be said that strategic thinking is essential for engaging in entrepreneurial projects and succeeding in a changing environment. The findings are of value for companies, decision-makers, and researchers seeking to increase success in entrepreneurial activities that are vital for businesses.

Keywords: Strategic Thinking, Emotional Intelligence, Entrepreneurial Orientation

ÖZET

Girişimcilik, ülkelerin ekonomik bakımdan güçlü olabilmelerinde en etkili unsurların başında gelmektedir. Yüksek belirsizlik ve yoğun çalışma koşulları içeren girişimcilik yolculuğunun başarılı bir şekilde sürdürülmesi, duygusal faktörlerin etkili bir şekilde yönetilmesini ve bir organizasyonda liderlik gereksinimi olarak giderek daha fazla önem kazanan stratejik düşünmeyi gerektirmektedir. Bu çalışma, duygusal zeka ve girişimcilik yönelimi arasındaki etkileşime aracılık etmede stratejik düşüncenin rolünü değerlendirmeyi ve bu bilişsel ve duygusal yeteneklerin işyerinde nasıl etkileşime girdiğine dair tam bir çerçeve sunmayı amaçlamıştır.

Araştırmada veriler elektronik ortamda hazırlanan anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Toplanan 400 anketten 34'ü eksiksiz olarak doldurulmadığı için elenmiş ve bu nedenle değerlendirmeye alınmamıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini İstanbul'daki 376 işletme yöneticisi oluşturmuştur. Yapısal eşitlik modellemesi (YEM), normal olmayan veri dağılımlarını ele alma yeteneği, küçük örneklem boyutlarında etkinliği, biçimlendirici değişkenleri analiz etme ve karmaşık modellere uygunluğu nedeniyle SmartPls 4.0 kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sonuçlar, liderlerin duygusal zekalarının stratejik düşünme biçimleriyle ve liderlerin stratejik düşünme biçimlerinin firmanın girişimcilik yönelimiyle ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Liderlerin duygusal zekasının firmanın girişimcilik yönelimi ile ilişkisi olduğuna dair ampirik bir kanıt bulunamamıştır. Bununla birlikte, stratejik düşüncenin liderlerin duygusal zekası ile firmaların girişimcilik yönelimi arasında tam aracılık etkisine sahip olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu durum, duygusal zeka ile girişimcilik başarısı arasında bir bağlantı olarak stratejik düşünmenin kritik önemini ifade etmektedir. Duygusal zeka önemli olmakla birlikte, girişimcilik davranışını etkili bir şekilde geliştirmek için stratejik düşünme ile birleştirilmesi gerektiği söylenebilir. Bu sonuçlara dayanarak, stratejik düşünmenin girişimci projelerde yer almak ve değişen bir ortamda başarılı olmak için gerekli olduğu belirtilebilir. Bulgular, işletmeler için hayati öneme sahip girişimcilik faaliyetlerinde başarıyı artırmak isteyen şirketler, karar alıcılar ve araştırmacılar için değer yaratmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Stratejik Düşünme, Duygusal Zeka, Girişimci Eğilimi.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the study of intelligence has evolved beyond traditional limits, leading to a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2011). This distinction, emphasized by researchers, highlights the significance of emotional intelligence—the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others to improve interpersonal relationships (Umesh et al., 2023). Within the realm of emotional intelligence, emotions play a crucial role in communication, requiring the capacity to see the bigger picture, identify patterns and trends, anticipate future outcomes, and create innovative solutions (Hassan et al., 2014).

On the other hand, the idea of strategic thinking is often defined as a cognitive process that involves analyzing complex situations, envisioning potential outcomes, and crafting long-term plans to achieve objectives while adapting to change. It encompasses elements like analytical reasoning, creativity, and practical implementation, aiming to align vision with actionable strategies (O'Shannassy, 1999). At its core, strategic thinking is about setting purpose, vision, and strategic goals, with each person customizing their strategies based on unique ideas and objectives (Olson & Simerson, 2015). This approach not only helps individuals manage their emotions and stay calm under pressure but also greatly improves decision-making skills in high-stress situations (Salas, 2017). The combination of emotional intelligence (EI) and strategic thinking in the provided article suggests that while EI contributes to improved capabilities like empathy, self-awareness, creativity, and innovation, these traits enhance thinking orientation, including strategic approaches. Emotional maturity and EI skills serve as foundational elements that help individuals and managers more effectively engage in strategic thinking by facilitating complex problem-solving, adaptability, and holistic perspectives in management (Mishra & Dha, 2001).

The connection between organized thinking and balanced emotions is crucial for making intelligent decisions, both in the short and long term (Juha, 1991). This synergy allows entrepreneurs to build a successful framework for their businesses (Schutte et al., 2001). High emotional intelligence is a key trait that supports strategic thinking, giving individuals the confidence, they need to thrive in their entrepreneurial pursuits (Dincer et al., 2011). Those who skilfully manage and utilize their emotions often possess keen intuition, which helps them spot opportunities that others might miss (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). Additionally, emotional intelligence (EI) positively impacts employee creativity, with this relationship being amplified

by proactive personality traits and a supportive organizational climate. Creativity was maximized when employees demonstrated high EI alongside a proactive approach and worked in an environment conducive to innovation (Jafri et al., 2016).

This study seeks to highlight the important roles that emotional intelligence and strategic thinking play in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, ultimately creating a culture of success and growth among entrepreneurs in various settings.



CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Strategic Thinking Definitions

Strategic thinking is a mental process involving the careful consideration of how one's actions, as well as the actions of others, affect outcomes in situations of interdependence (Porter, 1996). It is distinct from individual decision-making because it involves anticipating and responding to the choices of other people, rather than merely reacting to environmental or circumstantial factors (Camerer, 1995). Strategic thinking is not limited to high-level corporate decisions but occurs in everyday life, from simple interactions such as haggling at a market to more complex group dynamics such as jury deliberations or negotiations (Halevy, 2016).

The key to strategic thinking is comprehending "outcome interdependence," which is the idea that people's decisions and those of others have an interdependent impact on each other's outcomes. Our decisions, whether they are made in a personal or professional setting, have an impact on everyone involved, including ourselves, whether we are sharing, cooperating, or negotiating. The interconnectedness of strategic decisions is demonstrated by the fact that choices like how much work to put into a project or how to negotiate a business deal have a direct impact on the performance of the team or organization (Halevy, 2016).

Furthermore, there are a wide variety of circumstances in which strategic thinking is applied. Open debates and conversations allow people to speak freely with one another; in other contexts, such as sealed-bid auctions, communication may be limited (Van der Heijden, 2005). Comparably, some strategic choices are done sequentially—like voting—while others are made simultaneously—like building trust over time (Hamel, 1997). Another way that strategic thinking is different from other decision-making processes is in how it deals with nature—unpredictable events and situations that don't react to or interact with personal objectives or choices (Adobor et al., 2021).

Strategic thinking ultimately comes down to identifying and evaluating the impact that our decisions have on other people as well as the other way around (Porter, 1996). To maximize benefits and avoid risks within interdependent systems, it is necessary to take into account potential outcomes from a variety of perspectives (Halevy, 2016).

1.2. The Historical Development of The Concept of Strategic Thinking

Over time, advancements in organizational behavior and corporate theory have greatly influenced the idea of strategic thinking (Gavetti, 2012). Its origins can be found in antiquated military tactics, especially in the writings of Sun Tzu in *The Art of War* and the theories of warfare created by individuals such as Carl von Clausewitz (Reynolds, 1978). Organizations employ foresight strategies to proactively navigate complex business environments, emphasizing the critical role of environmental scanning to analyze external factors and identify emerging trends, opportunities, and risks (Rasuli, 2024). A move toward more structured and long-term planning was brought about in the corporate setting by the Industrial Revolution and the rise of huge organizations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Franck & Galor, 2021). Early business thinkers such as Alfred Sloan of General Motors introduced the concept of decentralized management, which required strategic foresight to balance the short-term and long-term goals of various business units (Dale, 1956).

With the introduction of formal strategic planning processes in organizations in the middle of the 20th century, strategic thinking became more and more popular (Bernard & Ruth, 2008). Important personalities like Igor Ansoff, who is frequently referred to as the father of strategic management, rose to prominence during this time. A key idea in strategic thinking even today, Ansoff's work highlighted the significance of matching an organization's internal capabilities with external market conditions (Ansoff, 1977). At this time, the majority of people believed that strategy was a top-down process run by senior management, with an emphasis on examining internal strengths and weaknesses, competitors, and market conditions (Nonaka, 1988). This structured approach to strategy paved the way for more flexible and adaptive models of strategic thinking, which emerged in response to the increasingly dynamic and complex business environment of the late 20th century (Malik, 1999).

Within the last decades of the 1900s, scholars like Henry Mintzberg started to question the inflexible, sequential frameworks of strategic planning. Because real-world circumstances frequently alter unexpectedly, Mintzberg claimed that strategic thinking should be more emergent and adaptive (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009). His research moved away from the rigid and too prescriptive aspects of previous strategic models, emphasizing the value of ongoing education, adaptability, and the capacity to deal with unforeseen obstacles (Mintzberg, 1993). This development represented an increasing realization that flexible plans are not the only foundation for effective strategy; innovative problem-solving, flexibility, and the capacity to grab opportunities when they present themselves all play a major role (Harrigan, 1985).

Globalization, technological advancements, and the growing complexity of contemporary marketplaces all have an impact on how strategic thinking is developed today. Businesses can now evaluate enormous volumes of data and make better decisions thanks to new tools for strategic analysis that have been brought about by the growth of digital technology and big data (Sengupta et al., 2006). The fundamentals of strategic thinking, on the other hand, are still applicable today. These include adaptation, foresight, and matching internal resources with external opportunities (Vecchiato & Roveda, 2010). The capacity for strategic thought has become increasingly important for individuals at all organizational levels, not only top executives, as firms face increasing levels of uncertainty and instability (Sinnaiah et al., 2023).

1.3. Scope of Strategic Thinking

The scope of strategic thinking encompasses a wide range of human interactions and decision-making contexts, where individuals' choices directly or indirectly influence others. Strategic thinking is necessary in any situation where there is outcome interdependence, meaning the actions and decisions of one person affect not only their outcomes but also the outcomes of others (Ratcliffe, 2009). This interdependence distinguishes strategic thinking from more isolated decision-making processes, such as individual choices made under uncertainty, which do not involve others' responses or actions. Instead, strategic thinking focuses on how people anticipate, respond to, and influence the behaviour of others in dynamic environments (Olson & Simerson, 2015).

Furthermore, transient encounters are not the only domain for strategic thinking (Hamel, 1997). It could involve long-term commitments like mentoring a colleague or negotiating a recurrent business contract, or it could involve one-time decisions like choosing a service provider or buying a car (Roger, 1992). The strategic considerations involved are influenced by a wide range of factors, including the stakes of the scenario, the power relations between participants, and the level of knowledge available (Godet, 2000).

This entails not just thinking about what other people could do but also comprehending their objectives, restrictions, and motives (Alastair, 1995). A strategic thinker might, for instance, take into account the objectives and possible reactions of the opposing side when negotiating a business contract, as well as how their own actions can promote collaboration or conflict (Anahera & Fredrin, 2024). Similar to this, in a team environment, choices regarding

leadership, project management, and resource allocation are influenced by how each team member's contributions affect the group's overall performance (Halevy, 2016).

Furthermore, Procedural interdependence describes how decisions are made within a group, whereas outcome interdependence describes the reciprocal influence that individual actions have on one another's outcomes (Wildschut et al., 2001). For example, in group decision-making, having members independently cast their votes represents a lower level of procedural interdependence compared to a consensus-building process where members openly discuss their preferences before reaching a joint decision (Tindale & Kluwe, 2015). Both forms of interdependence are central to understanding the scope of strategic thinking, as they shape how individuals interact and collaborate to achieve their goals (Olson & Simerson, 2015).

1.4. The Difference Between Strategic Thinking and Traditional Thinking

In particular, when it comes to organizational strategy, strategic thinking and traditional thinking are two essentially distinct methods of making decisions and addressing problems (Alastair, 1995). Conventional thinking, which is frequently connected to strategic planning, is more structured, linear, and centred on analysis and implementation (Heracleous, 1998). Strategic thinking, on the other hand, is more dynamic, innovative, and adaptive, enabling firms to traverse challenging and uncertain contexts (Haycock, 2012).

In traditional strategic planning thinking, objectives are stated, internal and external environments are analysed, strategies are formulated, and finally, the strategies are put into action logically and sequentially (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009). When the variables are known, predictable, and under control, this strategy performs well in stable conditions. Control, predictability, and using historical data to guide present and future decisions are emphasized (Mintzberg, 1993). Retrospective thinking involves reflecting on past events or imagining future events as if they have already occurred and working backward to the present, a process that can enhance idea generation in creative fields, though its effectiveness varies among individuals based on experience and training (Rollier & Turner, 1994). The premise behind this strategy is that, with sufficient data collected and analysis, it is possible to anticipate the future with a decent degree of accuracy; therefore, the key to success is having well-thought-out plans (Casey & Goldman, 2010).

Conversely, strategic thinking adopts a more flexible and comprehensive perspective. Rather than adhering to a strict structure, strategic thinking entails comprehending the wider systems within which an entity functions and remaining receptive to unforeseen prospects and

obstacles (Wildschut et al., 2001). Strategic thinking is centred on a systems approach, which acknowledges that organizations function inside intricate, interconnected systems in which minor adjustments can have a big impact (Kunc, 2024). Strategic thinking is intent-focused, which means that it is anchored in long-term vision while being flexible in the means by which it is achieved, in contrast to traditional thinking, which frequently concentrates exclusively on reaching predetermined goals (Jackson, 2016).

One further important distinction is that Retrospective thinking calls for "thinking in time." This indicates that it recognizes how past events have impacted the current environment and how future scenarios must be flexible enough to adjust as conditions change (Richard, 1986). In other words, it makes a fluid connection between the past, present, and future (Hamel, 1997). Organizations are more equipped to adjust to unanticipated changes and developing trends thanks to this temporal flexibility than they are with traditional planning (Goldman et al., 2015).

Strategic thinking is also hypothesis-driven, which distinguishes it from the more deterministic approach of traditional planning. Rather than assuming that one fixed strategy will work, strategic thinkers generate and test multiple hypotheses, constantly questioning assumptions and being open to revising strategies as new information becomes available (Liedtka, 1998). This hypothesis-driven approach encourages creativity and innovation, as it pushes leaders to consider alternative scenarios and remain agile in a rapidly changing environment (Rüegg et al., 2008).

Intelligent opportunism is one of the most prominent features of strategic thinking. When opportunities arise that do not exactly fit the original plan, strategic thinking welcomes them, but traditional thinking tends to resist deviating from predetermined plans (Pattinson, 2016). This kind of opportunism is not about being careless; rather, it's about spotting and seizing chances when they arise that align with the organization's overarching goals. Because of its greater flexibility and responsiveness to outside events, strategic thinking enables businesses to innovate and pivot in ways that traditional planning frequently is unable to (Min & Kim, 2022).

A mentality change is necessary to integrate strategic thinking into conventional planning procedures (Graetz, 2002). Strategic thinking is essential for businesses functioning in the fast-paced, complicated world of today since it flourishes in uncertain and changing circumstances,

whereas traditional thinking performs best in stable and controlled settings (Goldman et al., 2015).

Approaches to complexity, unpredictability, and adaptation are where strategic thinking and traditional thinking diverge most (Liedtka, 1998). Whereas strategic thinking is fluid, dynamic, and future-oriented, traditional thinking is more inflexible and execution-focused (O'Shannassy, 1999). Strategic thinking helps businesses to generate long-term value and stay flexible in a constantly changing environment by combining components including systems thinking, intent focus, thinking forward, hypothesis-driven approaches, and savvy opportunism (Goldman et al., 2015).

1.5. The Importance of Strategic Thinking for Entrepreneurship

In an ever-changing corporate environment, strategic thinking is essential for entrepreneurship as it offers a framework for innovation, decision-making, and long-term success (Easterby & Davies, 1983). Entrepreneurs work in circumstances that are by their very nature unpredictable, with rapidly advancing technologies and changing consumer tastes (Hitt et al., 2001). By anticipating obstacles, spotting opportunities, and coming to well-informed judgments that are consistent with their long-term goals, strategic thinking gives them the tools they need to successfully traverse this complexity (Terra & Passador, 2018). In contrast to conventional business thinking, which frequently concentrates on solving problems right away, strategic thinking stresses a larger picture by taking into account how different factors both inside and outside the company interact to form the future (Henriquez & Díaz, 2023).

The emphasis on innovation that strategic thinking places on entrepreneurship is one of its main advantages (Gunsel et al., 2011). By encouraging a systems perspective that enables entrepreneurs to see their company as a part of a larger ecosystem, strategic thinking fosters this creativity (Chaudhary et al., 2024). These systems thinking techniques make it easier to identify areas where process innovation can boost production, save expenses, and raise efficiency—all of which are essential for any firm to remain viable. Through the strategic alignment of their innovation endeavours with wider market trends, entrepreneurs can maintain a competitive edge and leverage rising prospects (Dogan, 2017).

Entrepreneurs must constantly assess their external environment—customers, competitors, and technological changes—and adapt their strategies accordingly (Tavakoli & Lawton, 2005). Strategic thinking supports this adaptability by encouraging entrepreneurs to be both hypothesis-driven and intelligently opportunistic (Liedtka, 1998). Rather than sticking

rigidly to a predetermined business plan, strategic thinkers test different hypotheses about what will work in the market and remain open to revising their strategies based on feedback and new information (Hitt et al., 2002). This allows entrepreneurs to pivot quickly, when necessary, a crucial capability in industries where market conditions can change overnight (Sinnaiah et al., 2023).

Moreover, strategic thinking improves an entrepreneur's capacity for efficient resource management (Abraheem & Mustafa, 2022). Due to their limited resources, small businesses and startups frequently have to make difficult choices about the use of their time, money, and human capital (Chandler, 1962). By assisting entrepreneurs in prioritizing projects that have the greatest potential to create long-term value. It guarantees that business owners concentrate on creating long-term competitive advantages in addition to short-term financial profits (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2005). For example, while spending money on innovation or customer satisfaction may not pay off right away, over time it can greatly improve brand loyalty and market placement (Goldman et al., 2015).

The ability of strategic thinking to promote resilience is a major benefit for entrepreneurs (Ahuja & Morris, 2001). The path of an entrepreneur is frequently paved with obstacles, ranging from unstable markets to financial strains. By anticipating risks and making plans for multiple possibilities, strategic thinking enables entrepreneurs to better prepare for unforeseen disruptions (Pisapia et al., 2005). Businesses can keep a long-term perspective while being adaptable in their short-term strategies by thinking ahead of time—making connections between past experiences, current circumstances, and future objectives (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009a). This kind of thinking is beneficial for managing crises as well as for grasping chances that may present themselves due to unanticipated events (Oscarsson, 2022).

Last but not least, the role of strategic thinking in assisting businesses in tackling environmental and societal issues has grown. Sustainability, moral behavior, and social responsibility are becoming increasingly important to investors and customers in the modern era (Alves et al., 2019). By lessening their effects on the environment, advancing social justice, or improving corporate governance, entrepreneurs who embrace strategic thinking are better able to incorporate these components into their business plans (Kickul & Lyons, 2020). By aligning their business goals with broader societal values, they can build stronger relationships with customers, investors, and other stakeholders, thereby enhancing their long-term viability (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2009b).

Strategic thinking is essential for entrepreneurship as it promotes innovation, resource efficiency, resilience, and adaptability (Abraheem & Mustafa, 2022). It helps entrepreneurs helping to navigate uncertainty and achieve sustainable growth. Through strategic thinking, entrepreneurs can not only survive but thrive in the highly competitive and dynamic world of modern business (York & Venkataraman, 2010).

1.6. The Strategic Thinking Dimensions

Organizations can evaluate and improve their strategic approaches with the help of the eight dimensions of strategic thinking, which offer a thorough framework. Every dimension delves into a distinct facet of strategy and provides valuable perspectives on how businesses can enhance their ability to make decisions, become more flexible, and stimulate creativity (Covin & Slevin, 1989). These aspects highlight how, in order to succeed over the long run, different viewpoints must be integrated and balanced (Dhir et al., 2018).

The first dimension, Continuous vs. Discrete, deals with how an organization's strategy changes over time—that is, whether it does so gradually or in phases. Because it is dynamic, continuous strategic thinking enables firms to gradually adjust to changing conditions (Mosakowski & Earley, 2000). This strategy works especially well in sectors of the economy where customer tastes, market conditions, or technological advancements change often (Hamel, 1997). A corporation can stay responsive and agile by implementing continuous strategies, which allow for real-time adjustments (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1995). Discrete strategic thinking, on the other hand, entails several stages of preparation and implementation, frequently in response to particular opportunities or difficulties (Mosakowski & Earley, 2000). Discrete strategies give an organization emphasis and clarity, which makes it easier to carry out specific activities or projects effectively (Vöge & Jurdziński, 2000). Both approaches have their advantages, and the key is to know when each is appropriate. Successful organizations blend the two, maintaining ongoing improvement while also recognizing when significant shifts are necessary (Liedtka, 1998).

The second component, emergent vs. predictive, addresses the formulation of strategies. More adaptable and flexible, emergent solutions are born out of unexpected events. It is essential to be able to change course quickly and react to unforeseen events in a world that is changing quickly (James, 1980). Businesses that use emergent strategies are better able to take advantage of fresh possibilities and deal with problems as they arise (Neugebauer et al., 2016). On the other hand, predictive methods look ahead and rely on trends and forecasts (Porter,

1996). Predictive strategy companies substantially spend in research and scenario planning to position themselves competitively and foresee future market situations. A balanced strategic thinker incorporates both approaches: using predictions to guide long-term planning while remaining open to emergent possibilities (Schoemaker, 1995).

The third dimension is called Internal vs. External, and it deals with how well internal resources and external influences are balanced (Dhir et al., 2018). The focus of internal strategic thinking is on utilizing an organization's assets, such as its workforce, corporate culture, and efficient operations (Winter, 1997). That being said, external strategic thinking looks outside, taking competitive pressures, customer wants, and market trends into account (Espedal, 2005). While an organization with an external focus may not be able to build the internal capacities required to meet external demands, a firm that only concentrates on internal variables runs the risk of losing contact with its market (Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997).

The competitive vs. cooperative dimension looks at how businesses relate to one another. Gaining market share, dominating a certain industry, and surpassing competitors are the main goals of a competitive strategy (Michael, 1997). This strategy frequently employs aggressive techniques like marketing, pricing, or innovation meant to surpass rivals (Liedtka, 1998). Conversely, cooperative strategies place more of an emphasis on working together to achieve shared goals with partners, rivals, or stakeholders (Angwin & Bonnici, 2015). Collaboration, whether in the form of partnerships, alliances, or joint ventures, can accelerate technical growth and contribute to shared success in businesses where innovation is critical (Campbell & Park, 2017). When it comes to competition and cooperation, thinkers need to weigh the pros and cons of both, understanding that sometimes cooperation can yield more value than competition (Hoffmann et al., 2018).

Growth strategies focus on expanding market presence, increasing revenue, and entering new markets, which are critical for organizations seeking to scale (Stahel, 2007). However, unchecked growth without corresponding internal development can lead to inefficiencies, cultural erosion, or operational challenges (Weiss, 1947). Development strategies focus on building internal strengths, such as innovation capacity, employee skills, or operational processes (Tse, 1988). Both growth and development are essential: companies need to scale to capture opportunities, but they also need to enhance their capabilities to sustain that growth (Schwenker & Bötzel, 2007).

The sixth dimension, historical strategic thinking, assesses how previous experiences have shaped strategy. Making decisions is aided by historical thinking, which considers the achievements, mistakes, and trends of the past (Drake & Brown, 2003). It assists organizations in drawing lessons from their past and applying them to new situations. However, an over-reliance on the past can cause businesses to stagnate because they can become caught up in antiquated ideas (Struckell et al., 2022). In contrast, historical thinking emphasizes innovation and the future, pushing businesses to seek new avenues and free themselves from the confines of the past (VanSledright, 2013). Good strategic thinkers strike a balance between both methods, taking lessons from the past while keeping an open mind to novel concepts and advancements (Mahnken & Potter, 2021).

Tangible assets are necessary for successful operations, intangible assets can give an advantage over competitors by impacting employee engagement, customer loyalty, and public perception (Kamasak, 2017). Even with great tangible products and services, companies that do not understand the importance of intangible assets may find it difficult to achieve long-term success (Sveiby, 1997). Strategic thinkers must evaluate their ability to provide consumers and stakeholders with both tangible and intangible value (Greco et al., 2013).

Improvement is crucial for maintaining competitiveness in established markets, as companies refine their offerings to better meet customer needs (Sudirjo, 2023). However, innovation is essential for staying ahead of the curve and responding to disruptive changes in the market (Avlonitis & Salavou, 2007). Successful organizations strike a balance between innovation and improvement, ensuring that they continually enhance their existing offerings while also exploring new opportunities and technologies (Henriquez & Díaz, 2023).

1.7. Strategic Thinking and Game Theory

Game theory and strategic thinking are closely related since both deal with decision-making in situations where the actions of several players affect the result (Singer, 1997). A mathematical technique called game theory examines how people or organizations decide by taking into account not just their own goals but also the possible actions of other parties (Rubinstein, 1991). It is essential to strategic since it assists in predicting the responses of rivals, partners, or other stakeholders, allowing decision-makers to select the best course of action that will produce positive results (Liedtka, 1998). Game theory is a tool frequently used by strategic thinkers to negotiate challenging circumstances involving rivalry, cooperation, and uncertainty (Van et al., 2022).

Interdependent decision-making, in which one player's success is impacted by the decisions made by others, is a fundamental component of game theory (Thompson & Hrebec, 1996). This is similar to many strategic situations that occur in real life, like commercial negotiations, market competition, and even political diplomacy (Peleckis et al., 2020). For example, in a game of chess, every player must carefully analyse both their next move and their opponent's anticipated move. The same holds for business strategy, as organizations need to predict how rivals will respond to choices on things like mergers, pricing, and new product introductions (Tavakoli & Lawton, 2005). Game theory helps strategic thinkers anticipate these reactions more accurately, which enables them to design tactics that maximize their results (Singer, 1997). Equilibrium outcomes are the result of this process, where no party has an incentive to change their selected course of action (Kreps, 1989).

The prisoner's dilemma, which emphasizes the difficulties of making decisions in competitive situations, is a well-known example of game theory (Nowak & Sigmund, 1994). Two players must choose in this scenario whether to support one another or turn on one another, and the outcome for each player depends on the other player's choice (Axelrod, 1980). The problem is that, although cooperation produces the best collective result, individual incentives frequently lead to selfish behaviour amongst the players, producing less-than-ideal results for both (Coronado & Benítez, 2023).

Another significant way that game theory is applied in strategic thinking is through the idea of zero- and non-zero-sum games. A player's gain exactly equals a player's loss in zero-sum games like chess (Gillies, 1959). Conventional business models perceive competition as a zero-sum game in which firms battle for market share, and any advantage enjoyed by one comes at the price of other competitors (McGrath, 2010). Non-zero-sum games, on the other hand, better capture contemporary strategic environments since they allow numerous players to either benefit or lose simultaneously (Raghavan, 2002).

Organizations can manage uncertainty and partial knowledge by utilizing game theory. A lot of strategic choices are taken without fully understanding the plans of rival companies or the state of the market (Calford, 2020). Game theory assists participants in evaluating the risks and probabilities associated with various strategies, thereby offering frameworks for decision-making in these unpredictable contexts (de Cursi, 2021). Strategic thinkers can handle these imbalances by using game theory ideas like screening and signalling, which teach them how to interpret actions and what to do when information is insufficient (Weissbart et al., 2013).

Strategic thinking benefits from sequential game theory, where players make decisions in sequence rather than simultaneously. In sequential games, the player who moves first often has an advantage because they can anticipate the likely response of others and adjust their strategy accordingly (Brocas et al., 2018). For example, if a company introduces a new product and a competitor must decide whether to launch a competing product, the first mover can often shape the competitive landscape to its advantage (Özer & Tınaztepe, 2014). Strategic thinkers use this concept to develop first-mover advantages in various business contexts (Kerin et al., 1992).

Game theory is an organized approach to understanding decisions involving numerous participants and enhances strategic thinking (Singer, 1997). Strategic thinkers can apply game theory to create better informed and successful strategies in commerce, diplomacy, and other domains where outcomes depend on the actions of others (Bekius & Gomes, 2023). This is because game theory helps strategists understand how competition, cooperation, uncertainty, and timing interact (Gillies, 1959). Decision-makers can foresee reactions, reduce risks, and seize opportunities thanks to the insights from game theory, which produces more robust and resilient strategic results (Camerer, 2003)

1.8. The Concept of Emotion

An essential component of human psychology, the idea of emotion functions as a central psychological process that affects perception, behaviour, and decision-making (N. S. Schutte et al., 2001). Psychologists have long disagreed about the nature of emotions, especially concerning the question of whether they are innately connected to subjective experiences (Solomon, 1993). Emotions were once thought to be human-only internal, subjective feelings, but new research indicates that they can also have objectively observable characteristics, such as alterations in behaviour and physiological changes, that can happen without conscious awareness (Pace-Schott et al., 2019). This casts doubt on the idea that feelings are exclusively subjective experiences and raises the prospect that animals may also have similar emotional experiences to us (Ang & Dyne, 2015). By studying emotions in animals, researchers have gained new insights into the universality of emotional responses and how these processes are linked to survival, communication, and social behaviour (de Vere & Kuczaj, 2016).

Apart from the fact that emotions are subjective versus objective, there are significant differences between various emotional states and the brain processes that underlie them (Esslen et al., 2004). For example, the distinction in neuroscience between "liking" and "wanting" has

helped to clarify how emotions affect motivation (Finlayson et al., 2007). The term "wanting" describes the incentive salience system of the brain, which is mostly controlled by dopamine-related pathways and produces a feeling of urgency or a desire for a reward (Rolls, 2000). This is not the same as "liking," which is connected to the enjoyment of the reward itself. These two processes can sometimes become dissociated, particularly in cases of addiction, where an individual may experience intense "wanting" for a substance or behaviour without necessarily "liking" or enjoying it (Havermans, 2012).

Another area of emotion research involves the study of negative emotions, such as fear and disgust. While these emotions share some overlapping neural pathways, they also have distinct mechanisms that shape how individuals react to perceived threats or undesirable stimuli (Solomon & Stone, 2002). Fear is often associated with the body's fight-or-flight response, preparing individuals to react to danger, while disgust serves as a protective mechanism against contamination or harmful substances (McCarty, 2016). In some psychiatric conditions, such as paranoia, the brain may assign excessive importance to negative emotions, creating a heightened state of "fearful salience" that distorts perception and contributes to maladaptive behaviors (Mirowsky & Ross, 1983). Similarly, in depression, the lack of incentive salience may result in anhedonia, where individuals experience a reduced ability to feel pleasure or motivation, further complicating their emotional and psychological well-being (Cooper et al., 2018).

The emotion is multifaceted, involving both subjective experiences and objective, measurable components. As research continues to evolve, it becomes clear that emotions are not just fleeting feelings but integral components of human cognition, motivation, and behaviour (Izard, 2009). Because of this complexity, it is crucial to investigate emotions from both a psychological and neuroscientific standpoint in order to gain a deeper knowledge of how emotions work, interact with motivational systems, and affect mental health (Celeghin et al., 2017). Researchers can create more effective treatment plans for emotional and motivational disorders by understanding the differences between various emotional processes and the neural bases of these processes. This will ultimately improve the mental health outcomes for patients with a variety of clinical conditions (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2007).

1.9. Concept of Intelligence

The concept of intelligence is a multifaceted and often debated area of study in psychology and philosophy (Phillip & Eric, 1997). Traditionally, intelligence has been defined as the capacity for rational thought, purposeful action, and effective interaction with the environment (Palanca-Castan et al., 2021). Early conceptions of intelligence can be traced back to the philosophical inquiries of Plato and Aristotle, with Sir Francis Galton, a pioneering English scientist, playing a pivotal role in the development of intelligence testing (Burt, 1962). However, the real advancement in understanding intelligence came with Alfred Binet's development of intelligence tests aimed at addressing educational needs, marking the beginning of modern psychometric assessments of intelligence (Varon, 1936).

Within the field of scientific psychology, intelligence is perceived primarily as a biological trait that manifests in behaviour and may be measured through individual variations in performance (Wahlsten, 2002). Intelligence remains a conceptually open concept, with some psychologists emphasizing intelligence's biological basis and others focusing on its behavioural and cognitive forms (Sternberg, 2012).

The contrast between actual performance and intellectual ability is a crucial component of intelligence (Ackerman, 1986). This distinction is important since a person's intelligence isn't always correlated with how well they do on certain tasks or in particular contexts (Sternberg, 1997). Exam outcomes can be greatly impacted by variables like stress, worry, or outside distractions (Parker et al., 2006). As a result, even those with excellent intellectual capacity may underperform. Therefore, intelligence is defined as the capacity to reason, act with intention, and solve issues successfully in a variety of situations, rather than only being determined by one's performance on intelligence tests (Sternberg, 1999). This was emphasized by David Wechsler, who described intelligence as the "global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment." Wechsler's definition highlights the dynamic and adaptive nature of intelligence, which is not just a static trait but one that can be shaped by cognitive abilities, motivational factors, and the specific demands of a given situation (Sternberg, 2012).

As a systematic means of evaluating intellectual capacity, intelligence tests have been instrumental in operationalizing the notion of intelligence (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986). Opponents contend that the complexity of intelligence, especially its non-cognitive facets like emotional intelligence and practical problem-solving skills, may not be adequately measured

by these tests (Langley, 2000). Furthermore, the results of IQ tests can be influenced by cultural and socioeconomic circumstances, casting doubt on their objectivity and the degree to which they accurately reflect natural intellectual capacity (Neff, 1938).

The concept of intelligence also encompasses the idea of an upper limit or natural ceiling to human intellectual capacity (Furneaux, 1973). While this limit is not explicitly defined, it suggests that there are boundaries to human intelligence, much like there are limits to physical attributes like height and strength (Neisser et al., 1996). However, this upper limit is often theoretical and varies greatly across individuals (Thorndike & Stein, 1937). Furthermore, intelligence is not entirely static; it can be shaped and enhanced through education, experience, and cognitive training, though the extent of such improvements may vary depending on genetic and environmental factors (Colom et al., 2010).

1.10. Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Zeidner et al., 2004). It encompasses a set of skills that include emotional awareness, the capacity to harness emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, and the ability to regulate both positive and negative emotions in oneself and others (Lane et al., 1990). The concept has garnered significant attention since its emergence, especially after being popularized by Daniel Goleman in the 1990s (Goldman, 2007). Despite its growing recognition, EI has been a subject of considerable debate within the field of psychology, particularly in terms of its definition, measurement, and practical relevance in various contexts like workplace performance and leadership (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018).

The absence of a commonly agreed-upon definition for emotional intelligence is one of the main issues it faces (Wong & Law, 2002). The concept of emotional intelligence is unclear and inconsistent as a result of the many models that academics and theorists have put forth (Mayer et al., 1999). For example, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso define emotional intelligence (EI) as the capacity to recognize and articulate emotion, integrate it into ideas, comprehend the complexity of emotion, and successfully control emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). In contrast, more expansive interpretations combine emotional intelligence (EI) with social skills, empathy, and emotional competence. Because of the ambiguity surrounding these overlapping conceptions, researchers have distinguished between emotional intelligence and emotional and social competence (ESC), stressing that these are distinct but related ideas (Morrison, 2006).

The accuracy and consistency of EI assessment instruments is a further hotly debated topic. Although a number of psychometric tests, like the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) (Bar-On, 2012) and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), have been designed to measure emotional intelligence, questions about their accuracy still exist (Mayer et al., 2000). Some detractors contend that the subjectivity of self-reports or the test-taker's emotional state during the assessment could affect these instruments and skew the results (Borgonovi et al., 2023). Notwithstanding these drawbacks, new research indicates that other assessment approaches—especially those that take context into consideration—may provide more accurate means of evaluating emotional intelligence (O'Connor et al., 2019).

The practical relevance of emotional intelligence, particularly in organizational settings, has also been a focal point of discussion (Côté, 2014). Proponents argue that EI is a crucial determinant of success, sometimes even more critical than cognitive intelligence (IQ), especially in fields that require strong interpersonal skills, stress management, and leadership (Schutte et al., 2001). Conversely, sceptics have criticized the concept, claiming that EI is simply a rebranding of established psychological constructs and that its purported impact on performance has been overstated (DeRose, 1995).

However, recent research has shown that EI has incremental validity and can explain unique variance in outcomes connected to the workplace (Petrides et al., 2007). People with high emotional intelligence (EI) typically do better in social interaction, stressful, or emotionally complex situations because they can handle emotionally charged situations with greater skill (Chrusciel, 2006). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that emotional and social competence (ESC) is a strong predictor of leadership success and job performance, highlighting the significance of these categories in real-world settings (Boyatzis, 2008).

1.11. Historical Development of Emotional Intelligence

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) was first introduced in the scientific literature in 1990 by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer, marking the beginning of a significant shift in the understanding of intelligence and its broader applications. EI quickly gained traction, both within academia and popular psychology which propelled the concept into mainstream awareness (Mayer et al., 2000).

Emotional intelligence has historically been viewed as a counterweight to conventional ideas of cognitive intelligence (IQ), casting doubt on the widely accepted belief that success in life and the workplace could be predicted only by intellectual capacity. The four main elements

of Salovey and Mayer's original ability model of emotional intelligence were the capacity to notice emotions, comprehend emotions, control emotions, and use emotions to aid in thought. This model established the foundation for further studies in the area by emphasizing the cognitive processing of emotions (Mayer et al., 2016)

Alternative models of emotional intelligence have also emerged during the course of the field's growth. Reuven Baron's Emotional-Social Intelligence (ESI) model, which was introduced in 1997, expanded the concept of emotional intelligence to encompass a blend of social and emotional skills (Reuven, 2006). In addition to emphasizing the value of interpersonal connections, stress management, and emotional expression, Bar-On's approach opened the door for real-world applications in the evaluation of emotional intelligence in diverse settings (Jasvinder, 2010).

1.12. Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

An important idea that emphasizes how emotions influence behavior, judgment, and interpersonal interactions is emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence (EI) can be categorized into five main components: motivation, self-regulation, self-awareness, empathy, and social skills. These elements enable people to comprehend and control both their own and other people's emotions, improving both personal and professional results (Mayer et al., 2000).

The first Dimension, self-awareness, is the foundation of emotional intelligence. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions as they occur (Bratton et al., 2011). This awareness includes not just identifying what you are feeling, but also understanding why you are feeling that way and how your emotions affect others. Self-awareness allows individuals to accurately assess their strengths and weaknesses, enabling more informed decision-making (Malekar, 2007). People with high self-awareness are more likely to trust their instincts and make sound decisions, whether in their personal lives or careers (Monat, 2017). This element also involves a clear understanding of one's moral compass, allowing individuals to act in ways that are consistent with their beliefs and ethics (Lieke et al., 2021).

Extending the concept of self-awareness, self-regulation entails controlling one's feelings, especially in trying circumstances (Grewal et al., 2006). The next stage for people is to properly regulate their emotions after they become aware of their emotional states. Maintaining self-control means resisting the need to let feelings, particularly unpleasant ones like rage or irritation, dictate how you respond to situations (Logue, 1988). Discipline and a

cool, collected approach to problem-solving are needed for this (Antonopoulou, 2024). Self-reliant individuals are able to control their emotions, behave respectfully toward others, and resist spontaneous outbursts. Additionally, they accept personal responsibility for their deeds, understanding that effective emotional control is essential to their conduct (Bagozzi, 1992). By staying true to their values and remaining adaptable in the face of adversity, emotionally intelligent individuals create more positive interactions and avoid unnecessary conflicts (Tangney et al., 2007a).

The third essential component of emotional intelligence is motivation, which is the desire to succeed and advance oneself. It entails having high expectations for oneself and taking initiative to achieve objectives (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Rather than just focusing on obtaining short-term benefits, motivation is driven by a desire for excellence and a dedication to achievement (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2018). People with emotional intelligence are resilient and persistent, able to keep going after obstacles without losing enthusiasm (Tangney et al., 2007b). An important part of this element is the ability to find the silver lining in difficult situations. Highly motivated people are optimistic by nature, able to see challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles (Buehler et al., 1997). They take initiative, act on opportunities, and consistently push themselves to improve, which is key to both personal fulfilment and professional success (Antonopoulou, 2024).

The fourth component, empathy, is an essential interpersonal ability that entails perceiving and reacting to other people's feelings. By enabling people to view the world from another person's point of view, empathy promotes stronger bonds and more fruitful communication (Cuff et al., 2016). People that possess emotional intelligence are able to identify the feelings of others and react accordingly, providing assistance or changing their strategy according to the emotional requirements of those in their vicinity (Mayer & Geher, 1996). Because it enables people to handle conflicts with tact and compassion, empathy is essential to conflict resolution (Antonopoulou, 2024). Furthermore, empathy encourages inclusivity and respect for variety by allowing people to recognize the distinctive experiences and viewpoints of people from other backgrounds (Landa-Galindez et al., 2024). The ability to listen actively and interpret non-verbal cues such as body language further enhances empathetic communication, allowing individuals to build trust and foster collaboration (Kellett et al., 2006).

Lastly, the capacity to maintain positive relationships and engage in constructive, harmonic interaction with others is embodied in social skills. Building rapport and keeping

healthy connections are skills that people with great social skills excel (Schiavio et al., 2019). They are frequently viewed as strong team members and leaders who can inspire others and resolve disputes positively (Hou-ming & Bo, 2011). The capacity to listen to others and react appropriately to their concerns is another aspect of social skills, as is the ability to speak effectively and convincingly (Spence, 2003). Collaboration, bargaining, and motivating others are among the qualities that people with great social skills succeed at, whether in work environments or personal relationships (Lee & Yan, 2019). They are also skilled at managing change and navigating complex social dynamics, which makes them invaluable in leadership roles (Riggio & Reichard, 2008).

The five elements of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—form the foundation for understanding and managing emotions in a way that promotes personal and professional success (Antonopoulou, 2024). Each element contributes to a person's ability to navigate the complexities of human interactions, maintain emotional balance, and achieve long-term goals (Mayer et al., 2008). By developing emotional intelligence, individuals can improve their decision-making, strengthen relationships, and enhance their overall well-being. Emotional intelligence is not only vital for individual success but also for fostering positive and productive environments in workplaces, communities, and personal relationships (Antonopoulou, 2024).

1.13. Emotional Intelligence Models

In organizational and psychological contexts, emotional intelligence (EI) has attracted a lot of attention, which has resulted in the creation of several models that describe its elements and functions (Ybarra et al., 2011). Each of the three main theories of emotional intelligence—the ability model, the mixed model, and the trait model—was developed by a different theorist who took a unique angle while studying emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2004). The concept's creators, Salovey and Mayer (1990), presented the ability model and defined emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize, comprehend, control, and make effective use of emotions in both oneself and others (Mayer et al., 2016). This approach highlights emotional intelligence (EI) as a type of cognitive skill that is similar to traditional intelligence and that can be improved and developed by education and training (Mayer et al., 2000).

On the other hand, emotional intelligence is said to consist of a variety of emotional abilities and talents that support both personal and professional success, according to Howard Goleman's mixed model, which combines both emotional and cognitive components (George,

2000). Emotional intelligence, which encompasses self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, has a significant impact on both transformational and transactional leadership behaviours. Specifically, higher EI levels are linked to more effective transformational leadership, which involves inspiring and motivating staff, and transactional leadership, which focuses on structured interactions and rewards (Nurul et al, 2017).

According to Petrides and Furnham's trait model, emotional intelligence is a set of emotional self-perceptions that fall under a larger category of personality qualities (Sambol et al., 2022). The trait model, in contrast to the ability model, contends that emotional intelligence is a broad category that includes a variety of emotional traits that affect a person's ability to deal with the emotional demands of life (Mayer et al., 2016). This paradigm emphasizes the significance of one's own self-perception and how they see their emotional capacities, which may or may not match one's true emotional capacities (Pérez-González et al., 2020).

Despite the differences among these models, they share common ground in delineating emotional intelligence as both personal and social intelligence (Borgonovi et al., 2023). For instance, both Salovey and Mayer, and Bar-On, whose mixed model also includes emotional and social competencies, view emotional intelligence as a construct that encompasses understanding and managing one's own emotions, as well as those of others (Razzaq et al., 2016). This dual aspect—personal and social intelligence—is essential for effective emotional functioning and is widely acknowledged across different theoretical frameworks (Riggio & Reichard, 2008).

The ability, mixed, and trait models of emotional intelligence, among others, provide insightful information on how people view, process, and use emotions. Though each model offers a different perspective on emotional intelligence, the ability model is the most well-known since it is grounded in empirical research and closely aligns with the fundamental definition of emotional intelligence (Neubauer & Freudenthaler, 2005). Emotional intelligence is important because it is a crucial part of overall intelligence and competency in a range of life domains. This understanding not only supports personal development and interpersonal relationships but also informs practices in organizational settings, education, and other domains (Pérez-González et al., 2020).

1.14. The Concept of Entrepreneurship

Historically, definitions of entrepreneurship have varied significantly, shaped by different disciplinary perspectives, including economics, management, psychology, and

sociology (Gartner, 1990). This definitional diversity has led to a rich but often fragmented understanding of what entrepreneurship entails. Authors like (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) have contributed to this discourse by exploring entrepreneurship as a complex interplay of opportunity pursuit, innovation, value creation, and risk management. However, this multitude of definitions has sometimes confused the boundaries and core elements of entrepreneurship, complicating its study and application across various contexts (Davidsson, 2008).

As a fundamental component of the entrepreneurial process, idea formulation and validation are emphasized in Prince, Chapman, and Cassey's reinterpretation of entrepreneurship (Prince et al., 2021). According to their argument, we may develop a more thorough knowledge of entrepreneurship that applies to various industries and settings by concentrating on these core characteristics (Bhave, 1994). In the quickly evolving economic world, where entrepreneurial efforts can take many different forms beyond typical firm launches, this perspective is especially pertinent (Prince et al., 2021). For instance, there are several ways that entrepreneurial activity might take place, including social entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship within already-existing firms, and technical innovation (Peredo & McLean, 2006). By adopting a broader lens, the authors encourage researchers and practitioners to recognize the varied manifestations of entrepreneurship and the underlying processes that drive these actions (Atallah et al., 2023).

One significant contribution of this broader definition is its potential to inform entrepreneurship education and research (Bécharde & Grégoire, 2005). The demand for entrepreneurship education has surged over the past two decades, as individuals and organizations increasingly recognize the value of entrepreneurial skills in today's economy (Kuratko, 2011). However, as noted by the authors, there is often a lack of continuity and coherence in the programs offered across educational institutions (Ratten & Usmanij, 2021). A clear and encompassing definition of entrepreneurship can help establish discipline boundaries, thereby demarcating what entrepreneurship is and, equally importantly, what it is not (Peredo & McLean, 2006). This clarity can enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education by ensuring that programs are tailored to cover the essential skills and knowledge required for entrepreneurial success (Prince et al., 2021).

From a research perspective, definitional clarity facilitates more focused investigations into the entrepreneurial process (Moroz & Hindle, 2012). It helps establish the questions to be asked and the behaviours, processes, and outcomes to be studied (Stopford & Baden-Fuller, 1994). By providing a clear framework for understanding entrepreneurship, researchers can

accumulate concerted evidence and insights, thereby advancing the field (Kuratko, 2011). The authors highlight the importance on high-growth entrepreneurship, which has dominated much of the literature (Autio & Rannikko, 2016). They advocate for a more inclusive approach that considers all types of entrepreneurships, reflecting the myriad ways in which entrepreneurial activities can be enacted (Hall et al., 2012).

1.15. Types of Entrepreneurships

Entrepreneurship comes in many forms, each with its own unique characteristics, objectives, and challenges. Understanding the different types of entrepreneurships is critical to appreciating the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial endeavours and how they contribute to the economy and society (Kuratko et al., 2021).

Small Business Entrepreneurship is perhaps the most common form, characterized by individuals or families who run their own businesses to earn a living and support their communities (Carlsson, 1999). Small business owners typically focus on local markets, and examples include small shops, service providers, or artisans (Blankson et al., 2006). Unlike startups aiming for rapid scaling, small businesses generally seek steady growth, emphasizing customer loyalty and personal relationships. Though not always associated with high growth, they are crucial to the economy, providing jobs and stability (Audretsch, 2002).

Scalable start-up entrepreneurship refers to the establishment of businesses that aim to grow rapidly by leveraging technological innovation to address societal challenges and improve overall welfare. These start-ups are designed with scalability in mind, meaning they can expand efficiently in terms of revenue and customer base without a proportional increase in operational costs. This type of entrepreneurship often focuses on creating innovative solutions that attract local and foreign investment, contribute to economic growth, and provide societal benefits such as job creation, income generation, and technological advancement (Susilo, 2020).

These start-ups typically operate with a vision of achieving rapid expansion and global reach. Scalable startups thrive on innovation, building upon cutting-edge ideas to address pressing needs or create new markets. Silicon Valley technology firms exemplify this type of entrepreneurship, with the potential for significant societal impact and wealth creation (Hanifzadeh et al., 2024).

Intrapreneurship occurs within established organizations, where employees are encouraged to think and act like entrepreneurs. Intrapreneurs innovate within their companies

by developing new products, services, or business processes that generate value. This form of entrepreneurship can drive company growth, enhance productivity, and foster a culture of continuous improvement (Parker, 2011).

Large Company Entrepreneurship involves the innovation and development of new products or services within established companies. Unlike intrapreneurs, who act as internal entrepreneurs, large company entrepreneurship often encompasses entire divisions or strategic initiatives aimed at capturing emerging markets or responding to new competitors (Pearson, 1989). This type often results from shifts in consumer preferences, advancements in technology, or competitive pressures. Large firms leverage their existing resources, brand reputation, and market reach to launch new ventures, maintaining their competitive edge (Miles & Darroch, 2006).

Imitative Entrepreneurship involves adopting and adapting existing ideas or models, often tailored to new or underserved markets. Entrepreneurs who engage in this form typically replicate a business concept proven successful elsewhere but adjust it to fit local needs (Ziegler, 1985). This approach reduces risk and uncertainty since it builds on existing market validation. For instance, franchisees and entrepreneurs who localize global business models are examples of imitative entrepreneurship. (Ziegler, 1985).

Innovative Entrepreneurship focuses on bringing entirely new ideas, products, or processes to market. These entrepreneurs challenge the status quo and create solutions that have never been seen before, driving technological advancements, societal changes, and new business models (Bessant & Tidd, 2007). Innovation can be both incremental and disruptive, with the latter having transformative impacts across industries (Li & Huang, 2019). Innovative entrepreneurs are often driven by creativity and are critical to driving progress and shaping the future.

Hustler Entrepreneurship emphasizes hard work, resilience, and persistence. Hustler entrepreneurs are characterized by their "no-excuses" attitude, often starting small and working tirelessly to grow their businesses incrementally (Kuratko et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial hustle involves the urgent and unconventional actions entrepreneurs take to address challenges and opportunities in uncertain environments (Gupta, 2021).

Social Entrepreneurship seeks to create positive social change while maintaining financial sustainability. Social entrepreneurs are driven by a mission to solve societal challenges, such as poverty, education, healthcare, or environmental issues. (Huybrechts &

Nicholls, 2012) They blend business acumen with a deep sense of purpose, developing innovative models that deliver social impact. Unlike traditional businesses, the focus is on value creation for society rather than maximizing profits, often involving collaborations with governments, NGOs, and community groups (Seelos & Mair, 2005).

1.16. The Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a strategic framework that defines how firms engage in innovation, risk-taking, and proactivity to maintain a competitive advantage. According to (Miller, 1983), an entrepreneurial firm is one that focuses on product-market innovation, undertakes risky ventures, and proactively leads in introducing innovations, staying ahead of competitors. (Morris and Paul, 1987) emphasize that entrepreneurial firms are characterized by decision-making norms that prioritize proactive and innovative strategies, incorporating an element of risk. (Merz and Sauber, 1995) define EO as the firm's degree of proactiveness, aggressiveness, and willingness to innovate and create new offerings within its chosen product-market unit (PMU). (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996) expand on this by describing EO as a set of processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new market entry. These activities are marked by autonomy, innovation, risk-taking, and a competitive, proactive stance toward marketplace opportunities. Collectively, these definitions underscore EO as a multifaceted concept involving strategic innovation, risk-taking behaviour, and proactive decision-making that enables firms to thrive in dynamic and competitive environments.

The initial framework for measuring EO comprised three core dimensions: innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking, as articulated by (Linton, 2019). Innovativeness reflects a firm's ability to introduce new ideas and services, proactiveness indicates its inclination to anticipate and act on future market opportunities, and risk-taking represents the willingness to engage in ventures with uncertain outcomes (Avlonitis & Salavou, 2007). However, as research evolved, two additional dimensions—autonomy and competitive aggressiveness—were integrated into the EO framework (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022). Autonomy refers to the capacity of individuals within the organization to act independently in pursuing new ventures (Arregle et al., 2023), while competitive aggressiveness involves a firm's proactive response to competitors and the market environment (Sutejo & Silalahi, 2021). This broadened perspective of EO underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial activities within organizations (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

There are still a lot of gaps in the literature despite this broad focus. The majority of current research treats EO as an independent variable, with its effects on business performance frequently being studied as the dependent variable (Putniņš & Sauka, 2020). Moreover, a positive perception of entrepreneurship enhances students' emotional intelligence (EI), while the stigma surrounding entrepreneurial failure negatively impacts EI. Additionally, entrepreneurial orientation (EO) plays a significant mediating role in these relationships, offering valuable insights for entrepreneurship behavioral development (Martins & Perez, 2020)

One promising area for exploration lies in the mediating role of competitive advantage. The resource-based view (RBV) posits that a firm's competitive advantage stems from its unique, firm-specific resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Sugiarno & Novita, 2022). Given that EO encapsulates processes leading to new entry and innovation, it can be argued that it serves as an intangible resource that fosters competitive advantage (Al-Kahtani et al., 2024). This perspective implies that firms with a strong EO are better positioned to leverage their unique capabilities to create value, ultimately enhancing performance (Wales et al., 2023).

Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), and firm performance, while autonomy and competitive aggressiveness have no impact. The effect of EO on CA and performance is positively moderated by strategic knowledge management capability, with stronger outcomes at higher SKM levels (Mostafiz et al., 2022).

The connection between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and firm performance can often be clouded by the variety of performance measures used (Newbery et al., 2023). While financial indicators like profit margins and revenue growth are frequently utilized, non-financial metrics such as customer satisfaction and market share are also vital (Smith & Jambulingam, 2018). This lack of consistency in performance metrics may lead to the varied findings in the literature concerning the EO-performance relationship. Therefore, creating standardized measures of firm performance could help clarify how EO influences organizational success (Soares & Perin, 2019).

1.17. The Importance of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) is becoming increasingly acknowledged as a crucial factor for driving innovation and achieving organizational success in today's fast-changing

business landscape (Covin et al., 2020). Characterized by its multi-faceted components—such as innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness—EO offers a framework that helps companies manage complexities and seize new opportunities (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022). Firms with a strong EO are not only more skilled at spotting emerging market trends but also more capable of responding proactively, promoting a culture of ongoing learning and adaptability (Mishra, 2017).

The significance of EO lies in its ability to enhance a firm's innovation capabilities (Ribau et al., 2017). Successful service innovation (SI) requires organizations to blend creativity, technical feasibility, and market demand (Giannopoulou et al., 2014). By embedding EO within their strategic framework, firms can create an environment that encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and learning (Kreiser & Davis, 2010). This is particularly important in the context of service industries, where the unique characteristics of services—such as intangibility and perishability—demand a flexible and responsive approach to innovation (Jaw et al., 2010).

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is positively linked to innovation capability, with organizational learning capabilities (OLC) and absorptive capacity (AC) serving as mediators that enhance this relationship by fostering cognitive skills and integrating external knowledge with internal learning. This highlights how learning and knowledge creation processes act as critical drivers that strengthen EO's influence on innovation activities within firms (Makhloufi et al., 2021).

A study finds a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and organizational learning capability, suggesting that firms with higher entrepreneurial orientation tend to foster stronger learning capabilities (Alegre & Chiva, 2013).

1.18. Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) serves as a crucial framework for organizations aiming to foster innovation and capitalize on new opportunities in competitive settings (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). By grasping and applying EO principles, organizations can nurture a culture that encourages entrepreneurial actions across all levels (Fayolle et al., 2010). This concept is defined by five main dimensions: autonomy, competitive aggressiveness, innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking. Each of these dimensions plays a vital role in shaping an organization's ability to adapt, grow, and thrive in a constantly changing marketplace (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022).

Autonomy is the extent to which individuals or teams in an organization are allowed to independently create and execute entrepreneurial ideas (Wales et al., 2023). This aspect is vital as it nurtures a culture of creativity and innovation. When employees have the freedom to explore new ideas and take charge of their projects, they are more inclined to offer unique insights that can lead to successful innovations (de Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). A high level of autonomy enables employees to bypass bureaucratic obstacles that might hinder creativity (Carpenter, 2020). For example, Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works, renowned for its innovative aircraft designs, functions with a significant degree of autonomy, allowing teams to innovate quickly and effectively (Bommer et al., 2002). This sense of autonomy fosters ownership and accountability, motivating individuals to take initiative and try out new ideas without the limitations of conventional corporate frameworks (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022).

A study develops and tests a dynamic model of competitive interaction, showing that firms' sequences of competitive actions influence relative performance. Results indicate that these sequences are shaped by factors such as top management team heterogeneity, past performance, organizational slack, and key industry characteristics (Ferrier, 2001). Although competitive aggressiveness can lead to quick wins, it also carries certain risks. Companies need to be careful with their competitive approaches to prevent alienating potential partners and harming long-term relationships (Hughes et al., 2018). While some degree of competitive aggressiveness is essential for success, finding a balance that fosters collaboration within the industry is also crucial (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022).

Innovativeness is a crucial aspect of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), reflecting an organization's dedication to discovering new ideas and creative solutions (Avlonitis & Salavou, 2007). The need to reconceptualize innovativeness by arguing that existing unidimensional measures, such as innovation adoption timing or number of adoptions, are inadequate. Instead, it proposes a multidimensional approach that captures innovativeness as a consistent, enduring trait exhibited by firms over time (Subramanian, 1996).

Proactiveness emphasizes the need to anticipate future market demands instead of merely responding to current situations. Proactive organizations actively look for opportunities, often being the pioneers in entering new markets or adjusting to evolving consumer preferences (Rank et al., 2015). For instance, Proactive Communications, a company that operates in challenging environments, showcases proactiveness by recognizing and capitalizing on opportunities that others may shy away from (Yen et al., 2004). Their readiness to tackle high-risk scenarios has enabled them to establish a profitable niche in an unpredictable market. By

embracing a proactive mindset, organizations can position themselves as leaders and innovators in their fields, ultimately boosting their long-term sustainability and growth potential (Deschamps, 2009)

Risk-taking refers to an organization's readiness to pursue bold actions despite the uncertainties involved. This aspect challenges the common belief that entrepreneurs are reckless risk-takers (Macko & Tyszka, 2009). A Study show that successful entrepreneurs typically take calculated risks, employing planning and forecasting to reduce uncertainty. This kind of decisions highlight the crucial role of strategic risk-taking in fostering growth (McKelvie et al., 2011). Although the risks tied to bold actions can be intimidating, they are often essential for organizations aiming to achieve major breakthroughs and establish market leadership (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022).

The five dimensions of Entrepreneurial Orientation—autonomy, competitive aggressiveness, innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking—are interconnected and work together to help organizations navigate complex business landscapes (Saha et al., 2017). By cultivating a culture that values these dimensions, organizations can boost their ability to innovate, adapt, and maintain a competitive edge (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022). In a time when rapid change is commonplace, incorporating EO into strategic planning is essential for organizations that want to succeed and stand out in the constantly changing marketplace (Anderson, 2021a).

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Research Questions

Within the framework of the research objectives, the following questions can be set that will guide the study:

How does leaders' emotional intelligence influence the firm's entrepreneurial orientation, both directly and through its impact on strategic thinking?

2.2. Purpose of Research

This study primarily aims to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and strategic thinking, with a focus on how these factors influence entrepreneurial orientation. It seeks to determine if strategic thinking acts as a mediator between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial orientation. Understanding this relationship is crucial, as it sheds light on the psychological and cognitive mechanisms that may drive entrepreneurial behavior. By developing a theoretical framework, the study lays the groundwork to examine the core concepts of emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and entrepreneurial orientation, and to clarify how they interact.

The research extends beyond theoretical exploration by implementing an applied study on a sample of workers in Turkey. The Turkish context offers a unique setting to examine these relationships, as the country is home to a diverse workforce that includes both local and migrant workers navigating a rapidly evolving economic environment. This environment demands adaptability, resilience, and forward-thinking—a combination well aligned with the study's focus on emotional intelligence and strategic thinking. Analyzing these concepts among workers in Turkey not only enriches the cultural perspective of the research but also enables a practical assessment of the study's hypotheses.

2.3. Hypotheses Development

In formulating hypotheses for this study, it is crucial to analyze the important connections between emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and entrepreneurial orientation. This section delves into the theoretical underpinnings of each of these concepts, ultimately leading to hypotheses that clarify how they are interconnected and influence outcomes at the firm level. Specifically, the hypotheses examine the links between emotional intelligence and strategic

thinking, the relationship between leaders' strategic thinking and entrepreneurial orientation, and the connection between leaders' emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial orientation. Furthermore, the study looks into the mediating role of strategic thinking in the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial orientation, offering a deeper insight into how these variables work together to promote entrepreneurial success.

2.3.1. The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Strategic Thinking

The relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and strategic decisions is crucial in enhancing the effectiveness of managerial decision-making (Rajendra, 2024). Research indicates a strong positive correlation between the emotional intelligence of top management and the quality of their strategic decisions, suggesting that emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to navigate complex decision-making environments (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021). Emotional intelligence facilitates an understanding of interpersonal dynamics, enabling managers to foster collaborative relationships and open communication channels, which are essential for informed and timely strategic choices (Gómez et al., 2014). Moreover, Emotional intelligence (EI) enhances collaborative problem-solving (CPS) by fostering positive relational aspects like team cohesion and trust, ultimately improving team performance. Over more, in some cases, a heightened ability to recognize and express negative emotions within teams may hinder CPS quality, indicating a nuanced impact of EI on teamwork (Altaras et al., 2024). Furthermore, Emotional intelligence (EI) enhances effective leadership and decision-making by enabling leaders to manage their own emotions and those of others, fostering empathy, self-awareness, and social skills that are crucial for adaptive responses and team collaboration. Leaders with high EI make more balanced, informed decisions and cultivate positive organizational outcomes by leveraging strong interpersonal connections and emotional regulation (Goleman, 2005).

H1: Leaders' Emotional Intelligence Affects their Strategic Thinking

2.3.2. The Relationship Between Strategic Thinking and Firm's Entrepreneurship Orientation

Strategic thinking and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) are closely interrelated, as both disciplines intersect through their shared focus on opportunity recognition and advantage seeking. While entrepreneurship emphasizes opportunity seeking and new market entry, strategic management focuses on sustaining competitive advantages, and creating a synergy

that forms the foundation of the EO construct. EO is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional framework incorporating innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy, which together facilitate a firm's strategic approach to entrepreneurial activity and adaptability across different stages of its lifecycle (Gupta & Pandit, 2012).

Strategic thinking enhances a firm's entrepreneurial orientation by enabling managers to anticipate market trends, identify opportunities, and make proactive, innovative, and risk-informed decisions. This cognitive capability at the individual leadership level strengthens organizational entrepreneurial orientation, fostering a culture that embraces innovation, proactiveness, and calculated risk-taking for improved performance (Kalali & Heydari, 2016).

Moreover, Strategic thinking capability significantly influences a firm's entrepreneurial orientation, as it enhances key aspects such as innovation, personal control, and achievement. By improving strategic thinking through reframing, reflecting, and system thinking, a firm can foster a stronger entrepreneurial attitude orientation, ultimately boosting entrepreneurial activity and performance (Jelenc, Pisapia, & Ivančić, 2016). Furthermore, Strategic thinking plays a pivotal role in shaping a firm's entrepreneurial orientation (EO) by guiding leadership decisions that foster innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness. By enhancing strategic thinking capabilities, senior leadership can effectively influence the firm's EO, ensuring that resources are allocated in ways that promote entrepreneurial behaviours and drive growth (Anderson, 2021b).

Strategic thinking is integral to entrepreneurial leadership, as it enables leaders to identify opportunities, anticipate changes, and align resources with emerging trends. Entrepreneurial leaders use strategic thinking to drive innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness, which are key components of entrepreneurial orientation (EO). By integrating strategic thinking into decision-making, leaders can foster a culture that enhances EO, leading to greater organizational entrepreneurship and growth (Gupta et al., 2004)

H2: Leaders' Strategic Thinking Effects Firm's Entrepreneurship Orientation

2.3.3. The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Entrepreneurship Orientation

The relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has garnered significant attention due to the critical role emotional skills play in entrepreneurial behavior and firm performance. EI is defined as the ability to identify,

understand, and regulate one's own emotions, as well as to perceive and influence the emotions of others (Mayer et al., 2004) In the context of entrepreneurship, EI is crucial for managing the emotional demands of leadership, interacting effectively with others, and navigating the challenges that accompany innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking. These capabilities, which are central to entrepreneurial activities, suggest that leaders with high EI are more likely to exhibit behaviors that align with the three key dimensions of EO—innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking—thus enhancing the firm's overall entrepreneurial orientation (Zampetakis et al., 2009)

Leaders with high EI are better equipped to manage stress and emotional pressure, which allows them to engage in more proactive decision-making and foster an innovative organizational culture (Zampetakis et al., 2009). High EI leaders can accurately perceive and respond to both their emotions and those of others, facilitating effective communication and collaboration, which is essential for entrepreneurial behaviors such as creating new products, processes, or business models (Baron & Markman, 2000). Furthermore, emotional intelligence enhances a leader's ability to engage in risk-taking behaviors by helping them navigate uncertainty and assess opportunities with a balanced perspective (Goleman, 1995) This emotional awareness and regulation allow leaders to take calculated risks that are necessary for firm growth and innovation, critical aspects of EO.

Given the strong connection between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial behavior, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Leaders' Emotional Intelligence effects firm's entrepreneurship Orientation

2.3.4. The Mediating Role of Strategic Thinking in the Relationship Between Leaders' Emotional Intelligence and Firm Entrepreneurship Orientation

The relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence (EI) and a firm's entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is increasingly recognized in organizational research, with strategic thinking proposed as a key mediating factor in this relationship. Emotional intelligence refers to a leader's ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions, both their own and those of others (Mayer et al., 2004). Leaders who exhibit high EI are more likely to demonstrate greater empathy, adaptability, and self-regulation, which enhances their ability to engage in strategic thinking (Schutte et al., 2001).

Strategic thinking, in turn, involves the capacity to anticipate future trends, analyze complex situations, and craft long-term plans aimed at achieving organizational goals. This cognitive framework enables leaders to assess opportunities, weigh risks, and make decisions that align with the organization's vision and long-term success (Kenichi, 1983)

The connection between entrepreneurship and strategy, focusing on the development of the strategic and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) construct, which conceptualizes entrepreneurship as a firm-level phenomenon (Gupta & Pandit, 2012). Leaders who engage in strategic thinking are better positioned to guide their organizations through competitive and volatile markets, encouraging innovative solutions and proactive approaches to market opportunities. These leaders are not only able to anticipate future challenges but also mobilize resources toward fostering an entrepreneurial culture that embraces change, risk, and continuous innovation (Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010)

The mediating role of strategic thinking suggests that while emotional intelligence can influence a leader's ability to make strategic decisions, it is through strategic thinking that emotional intelligence translates into tangible entrepreneurial outcomes within the organization (Kundi, 2021). Leaders with high EI are more adept at managing emotions, which helps in decision-making, reduces stress, and promotes clarity of thought, thereby enhancing their strategic capabilities (Porter, 1996).

H4: Strategic Thinking mediates the relationship between the Emotional Intelligence of the Leaders and Firms Entrepreneurship Orientation

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Methodology, Population and Sample

This study employed a quantitative research methodology, utilizing a survey as the primary data collection method to investigate the relationships between emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and entrepreneurial orientation. A random sampling technique was applied to gather data from business managers in Istanbul, with an electronic questionnaire designed specifically for this purpose. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 34 were deemed unsatisfactorily completed and subsequently eliminated from the analysis, resulting in a final sample of 376 valid responses. To analyze the data, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed, chosen for its robustness in handling non-normal data distributions, effectiveness with smaller sample sizes, and capability to analyze formative variables within complex models. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the proposed relationships among the constructs under investigation.

3.2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The framework of this study centers on the interrelationships among three critical constructs: strategic thinking as the independent variable, emotional intelligence as the mediating variable, and entrepreneurial orientation as the dependent variable.

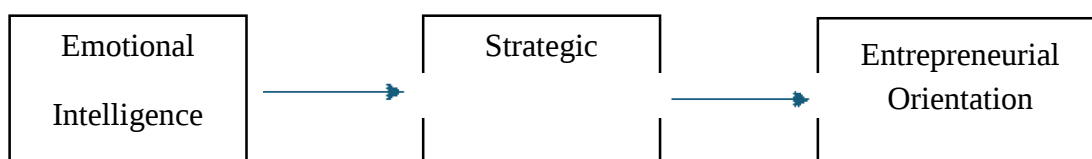


Figure 1. Model of The Study

3.3. Research Scales

- The Emotional Intelligence Scale contains 14 items developed by (Mehta & Singh, 2013) designed to evaluate emotional intelligence levels. Like the other scales, responses will be rated on a seven-point Likert scale, with the options:

(1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Slightly Disagree, 4 - Neutral, 5 - Slightly Agree, 6 - Agree, 7 - Strongly Agree).

- The Strategic Thinking Scale comprises 14 items developed by (Dhir et al., 2018) to assess strategic thinking capabilities. Responses to the items will be evaluated using a seven-point Likert scale, with the following options: (1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Slightly Disagree, 4 - Neutral, 5 - Slightly Agree, 6 - Agree, 7 - Strongly Agree).
- The Entrepreneurial Orientation scale, consisting of 18 statements developed by (Covin & Slevin, 1989), features nine statements on the left and nine on the right side. Responses will be measured according to the following scale: (1 - Not at all representative, 2 - Slightly representative, 3 - Moderately representative, 4 - Quite representative, 5 - Very representative, 6 - Mostly representative, 7 - Extremely representative).

3.4. Limitations of the Research

This study acknowledges numerous limitations, which may have impacted its findings. One notable limitation was the language barrier, as the survey was conducted in Turkish, which limited participation to Turkish speakers. This might have influenced the comprehension and replies of participants who were not qualified in the language, thus introducing bias and reducing the reliability of the obtained data. likewise, the study faced time restrictions during data collection, which may have altered the extent and depth of participant participation. Future studies might benefit from a greater geographical reach, multilingual survey choices, and a longer timeline to improve inclusion, representation, and the strength of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS & RESULTS

4.1. Demographic Summary

Table 1. Demographic Summary of the company

Variable	Classification	Frequency	Percent %
Gender	Male	203	54,0
	Female	173	46,0
	Total	376	100.0
Age	18-30	127	33,8
	31-40	173	46,0
	More than 41 years old	76	20,2
	Total	376	100.0
Job Tenure	1-3	121	32,2
	4-5	63	16,8
	Above 6	192	51,1
	Total	376	100.0
Year of establishment of the business	Above 20 years	30	8,0
	11-20	83	22,1
	6-10	204	54,3
	1-5	59	15,7
	Total	376	100.0
Position	Founder or Cofounder	37	9,8
	High-level manager CEO or CFO	49	13,0
	Mid-level manager such as department managers	290	77,1
	Total	376	100,0

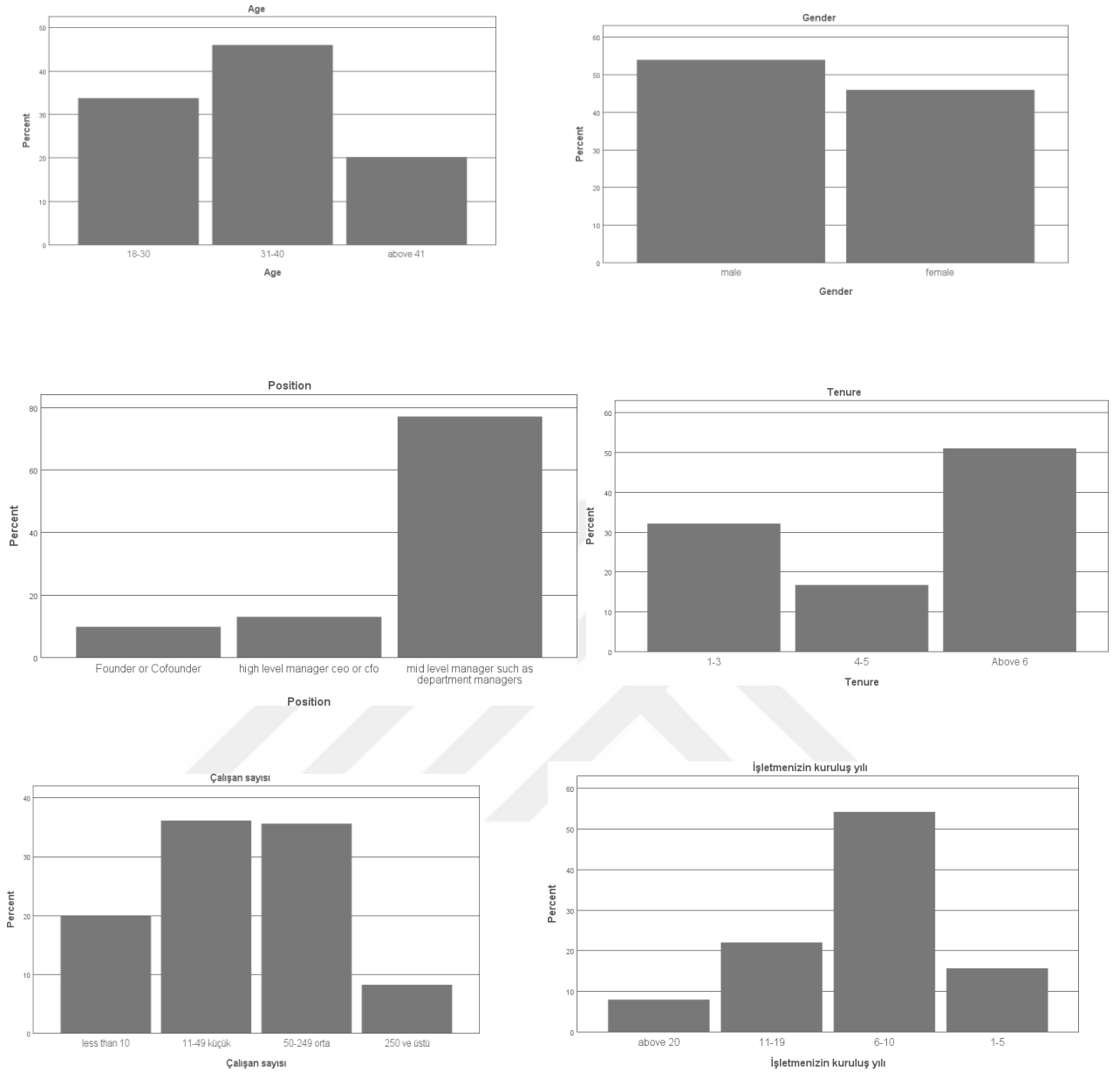


Figure 2. Demographic analysis of the participants

The descriptive data was analyzed after collecting it through the SPSS program, and it was found that 54% of the respondents were male and 46% were women. Looking at the question on age, it was found that 33.8% of the respondents were between 18 and 30 years old, 46% of the sample members were between 31 and 40 years old, and 20.2% of the sample members were older than 40 years old, as the data indicate that the majority of workers are immigrants. In Turkey, they are young, and the percentage of males is greater than that of females. As for the period during which the respondent remained at work, the results indicate that 32.2% of the sample members are in the same job from 1 to 3 years, while 16.8% of the

sample members are in work from 4 to 5 years, and 51% of the sample members are in the same job. For more than 6 years, this percentage indicates that the rate of labor turnover among workers in Turkey is low, as migrant workers seek to remain in the same job for a long period because it achieves economic security for them. Regarding the question regarding the organization in which immigrants work and its establishment, we find from the results that 8% of the organizations in which immigrants work were established 20 years ago or more, about 22% of the organizations were established during a period of 11 to 20 years, and 54% of the organizations were established during a period of 6 to 10 years. Over the past 15 years, approximately 15.7% of the organizations employed by immigrants were founded within a period of 1 to 5 years. As for the question about the status of workers among the sample in the organization in which they work, the results show that 9.8% of them are owners or participants in financing, 13% of them work in senior management, and 77% of them work in middle management and supervision.

4.2. Data Analysis and Results

The data was analyzed using the SmartPLS 4 program. First, the measurement model was evaluated using factor loadings, reliability, and convergent-discriminant validity analyses. Then, the second step involved conducting a structural model assessment as part of the evaluation process.

4.3. Reliability And Validity

The Overall sample was assessed and factor loadings below 0.40 were deleted and the analysis started again. Since deleting the relevant indicators did not change other indicators and reliability and validity, factor loadings belonging to EO2, EO3, ST12, ST5, ST6, ST3, ST4, and E11 were not removed (Hair 2017). Other indicators' loadings are higher than the desired value of 0.70. In the following table Factor loadings of the dimensions are described.

Table 2. Factor Loadings of the Dimensions

	SEA	OEA	UOE	ROE	REFL	OA	TRNDA	PATT	REGN	INV	PROA	RISKT
EI1	0.612											
EI2	0.775											
EI3	0.776											
EI4	0.777											
EI5		0.754										
EI6		0.846										
EI7		0.749										
EI8		0.787										
EI9			0.816									
EI10			0.802									
EI11			0.795									
EI12			0.705									
EI13				0.859								
EI14				0.883								
EI15				0.875								
EI16				0.828								
ST1					0.743							
ST2					0.789							
ST3					0.670							
ST4					0.696							
ST5						0.695						
ST6						0.620						
ST7						0.762						
ST8						0.793						
ST9							0.769					
ST10							0.762					
ST11							0.788					

ST12	0.676	
ST13	0.791	
ST14	0.784	
EO1		0.892
EO2		0.632
EO3		0.627
EO4		0.949
EO6		0.773
EO7		0.829
EO8		0.850
EO9		0.878

Notes: INV, OEA, OA, PTRC, PROAC, REFL, RISK, ROE, SEA, TRNDA, and UOE stand for; innovation, others' emotion appraisal, organizational awareness, pattern recognition, proactiveness, reflection, risk-taking, regulation of emotion, self-emotion appraisal, trend analysis and uses of emotion.

4.4. Construct and Convergent Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted values were observed to provide construct and convergent reliability. The analysis revealed that the Innovation, organizational awareness, Parr regn, Ness, and Trend Analysis factors had lower values than the desired threshold. However, the values between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable (Hair et al. 2022). The composite reliability values demonstrate that both rho_A and rho_C are within the permissible limits. Furthermore, the AVE values exceed the desired threshold of 0.50, confirming that construct reliability is indeed provided for this measurement model.

Table 3. Construct and Convergent Reliability Analysis Results

Factors	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
INV	0.618	0.814	0.766	0.530
OEA	0.796	0.829	0.865	0.616
OA	0.692	0.716	0.811	0.520
PTRC	0.625	0.644	0.795	0.566
PROAC	0.695	0.937	0.855	0.749
REFL	0.703	0.710	0.816	0.527
RISK	0.813	0.827	0.889	0.727
ROE	0.884	0.886	0.920	0.742

SEA	0.720	0.736	0.826	0.545
TRNDA	0.664	0.665	0.817	0.598
UOE	0.785	0.790	0.862	0.610

Notes: INV, OEA, OA, PTRC, PROAC, REFL, RISK, ROE, SEA, TRNDA, and UOE stand for; innovation, others' emotion appraisal, organizational awareness, pattern recognition, proactiveness, reflection, risk-taking, regulation of emotion, self-emotion appraisal, trend analysis and uses of emotion.

4.5. Discriminant Validity - Fornell and Larcker Criterion

Fornell and Larcker's criterion was used to check whether the discriminant validity was met. Based on this criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) should be larger than its correlation with other constructs. Upon reviewing Table 4, it can be confirmed that this condition is satisfied when comparing each construct with the other constructs in the same row and column.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell and Larcker Criterion)

Factors	INV	OEA	OA	PTRC	PROAC	REFL	RISK	ROE	SEA	TRNDA	UOE
INV	0.728										
OEA	0.035	0.785									
OA	0.122	0.185	0.721								
PTRC	0.190	0.178	0.562	0.752							
PROAC	0.526	0.034	0.132	0.172	0.865						
REFL	0.070	0.256	0.611	0.448	0.165	0.726					
RISK	0.472	0.025	0.066	0.102	0.598	0.094	0.853				
ROE	0.062	0.388	0.302	0.293	0.096	0.290	0.018	0.862			
SEA	-0.009	0.426	0.275	0.266	0.082	0.304	0.012	0.292	0.738		
TRNDA	0.262	0.216	0.564	0.645	0.173	0.436	0.130	0.313	0.258	0.773	
UOE	0.040	0.380	0.377	0.311	0.050	0.436	0.023	0.191	0.536	0.348	0.781

Note: The bolds represent the square root of AVE

The accuracy of the results may be impacted by common method bias, which can occur when data are gathered from a single person. A thorough internal VIF value analysis and a robust collinearity test are necessary to determine whether a reflective model is impacted by this bias. Common method bias does not affect the model if all internal VIF values are 3.3 or below (Kock, 2015). A thorough VIF test was run in this study to evaluate collinearity, and the findings indicated that no VIF value was higher than this crucial point.

Table 5. Inner Indicator VIF Results

INNER MODEL	VIF
OEA -> INV	1.41
OEA -> OA	1.399
OEA -> PTRC	1.399
OEA -> PROA	1.41
OEA -> REFL	1.399
OEA -> RISK A	1.41
OEA -> TRNDA	1.399
OA -> INV	2.07
OA -> PROA	2.07
OA -> RISK A	2.07
PTRC -> INV	1.942
PTRC -> PROA	1.942
PTRC -> RISK A	1.942
REFL -> INV	1.788
REFL -> PROA	1.788
REFL -> RISK A	1.788
ROE -> INV	1.323
ROE -> OA	1.205
ROE -> PTRC	1.205
ROE -> PROA	1.323
ROE -> REFL	1.205
ROE -> RISK A	1.323
ROE -> TRNDA	1.205
SEA -> INV	1.569
SEA -> OA	1.559
SEA -> PTRC	1.559
SEA -> PROA	1.569
SEA -> REFL	1.559
SEA -> RISK A	1.569
SEA -> TRNDA	1.559
TRNDA -> INV	1.97
TRNDA -> PROA	1.97
TRNDA -> RISK A	1.97
UOE -> INV	1.689
UOE -> OA	1.461
UOE -> PTRC	1.461
UOE -> PROA	1.689
UOE -> REFL	1.461
UOE -> RISK A	1.689
UOE -> TRNDA	1.461

Notes: INV, OEA, OA, PTRC, PROAC, REFL, RISK T, ROE, SEA, TRNDA, and UOE stand for; innovation, others' emotion appraisal, organizational awareness, pattern recognition, proactiveness, reflection, risk-taking, regulation of emotion, self-emotion appraisal, trend analysis and uses of emotion.

4.6. Validating High Order Construct for the Model

In this study, there are 3 dimensions, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, entrepreneurship orientation. Emotional intelligence consists of 4 subdimensions that are self-emotion appraisal, other's emotion appraisal, uses of emotion, and regulation of emotion. Strategic thinking consists of, reflection, organizational awareness, trend analysis, and pattern recognition. Finally, entrepreneurship orientation consists of innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking. All these dimensions were higher-order constructs. To construct validity the factor loadings, reliability, and validity were evaluated. The factor loadings all the indicators for variables have a value greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010) None of the items were removed due to factor loadings. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability, statistics for both were greater than the recommended value of 0.70 for the higher-order construct, hence indicating good reliability. Convergent validity was acceptable because AVE was higher than 0.50 for the high order construct.

Discriminant validity was assessed based on Fornell and Larcker (1981) and HTMT. It was observed all values are below than 0.90 for HTMT and the square root of AVE for the construct is higher than its correlation with all other constructs which means that the values provided met the required threshold as described in Table 6.

Therefore, it can be concluded that reliability and validity are established for higher-order constructs for all dimensions.

Table 6. Factor Loadings Cronbach's Alpha CR and AVE for HOC

	Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
OEA <- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	0.697	0.700	0.710	0.814	0.525
ROE <- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	0.637				
SEA <- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	0.775				
UOE <- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	0.778				
OA <- STRG THINK	0.840	0.827	0.827	0.885	0.659
PTRC <- STRG THINK	0.840				
REFL <- STRG THINK	0.840				
TRNDA <- STRG THINK	0.840				
INV <- EO	0.840	0.773	0.801	0.866	0.683
PROA<- EO	0.840				
RISKT<- EO	0.840				

Table 7. Discriminant Validity For HOC

HTMT Criteriation			
	EMOTIONAL INTEL	EO	STRG THNK
EMOTIONAL INTEL			
EO	0.091		
STRG THNK	0.643	0.260	
Farnell Larcker Criteriation			
	EMOTIONAL INTEL	EO	STRG THNK
EMOTIONAL INTEL	0.724		
EO	0.070	0.826	
STRG THNK	0.510	0.216	0.811

Note: The bolds represent the square root of AVE

4.7. Structural Model Assessment

4.8. Direct and Mediating Hypothesis Testing.

The evaluation of the proposed relationships was the next stage in our investigation. The findings indicated that leaders' emotional intelligence affects their strategic thinking H1: $\beta = 0.510$ $t = 5.822$, $p = 0.000$) since H1a is accepted. Analysis results also discovered that leaders' strategic thinking effects firm entrepreneurship orientation H2: ($\beta = 0.244$ $t = 3.284$, $p = 0.001$). However, there was no relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and firm entrepreneurship orientation (H3: $\beta = -0.054$, $t = 0.070$, $p = 0.439$) hence H3b was rejected.

Table 8. Direct and Mediating Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationships	Original sample (O)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Results
EMOTIONAL INTEL -> STRG THNK	0.510	0.088	5.822	0.000	H1: Accept
STRG THNK -> EO	0.244	0.074	3.284	0.001	H2: Accept
EMOTIONAL INTEL -> EO	-0.054	0.070	0.774	0.439	H3: Reject
EMOTIONAL INTEL -> STRG THNK -> EO	0.124	0.055	2.249	0.025	H4: Accept

After assessing the direct relationships, mediation analysis was performed. Mediation analysis was conducted following the guidelines Hair et al. (2017) gave. First, we check the specific indirect effect in the model. The indirect path of emotional Intelligence -> strategic thinking -> entrepreneurship orientation was significant, revealing that emotional intelligence indirectly affects entrepreneurship orientation via strategic thinking. ($\beta = 0.124$, $t = 2.249$, $p = 0.025$). Next, we checked the direct effect of emotional intelligence on entrepreneurship orientation ($\beta = -0.054$, $t = 0.774$, $p = 0.4399$) which was found to be insignificant. Since the indirect effect was significant but not the direct effect, the results indicate full mediation (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen; 2010). The following table 8 summarizes the mediation analysis results.

R square, also known as the coefficient of determination, provides insights into the proportion of variance in the endogenous variable that can be explained by the exogenous variable(s). In this model, it was discovered that strategic thinking R² is 0.26 while entrepreneurship orientation is 0.049. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines for assessing R² values in the context of endogenous latent variables, a value of 0.26 signifies a substantial amount of variance explained, while 0.13 reflects a moderate amount, and 0.02 represents a minimal amount. Based on Cohen (1988) it may conclude that the model has a minimal amount.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis presents an in-depth examination of the impact of leaders' emotional intelligence (EI) on strategic thinking and entrepreneurial orientation, supported by a detailed analysis of hypotheses. The results contribute meaningfully to the current discourse and offer nuanced insights that align and diverge from existing literature.

The findings of this study affirm the significant role of leaders' emotional intelligence in shaping their strategic thinking capabilities, with strong statistical evidence supporting this relationship. The results align with existing literature, which suggests that emotional intelligence is a key determinant in leadership effectiveness, particularly in navigating complex decision-making processes. Leaders who possess higher emotional intelligence tend to be more adept at managing interpersonal dynamics and, as a result, are better equipped to make informed, strategic decisions that benefit their organizations. This study underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, particularly in fostering an environment where strategic thinking can thrive and lead to enhanced organizational outcomes.

In comparing these results with existing research, a similar study in 2021 by (Alzoubi & Aziz) explores the direct relationship between emotional intelligence in top management and the quality of their strategic decisions. In line with our findings, this study also reports a strong, positive relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making quality. Moreover, what sets Alzoubi & Aziz (2021) apart is the inclusion of intelligent information systems (IIS) as a mediator between emotional intelligence and decision quality. This research highlights how IIS, combined with emotional intelligence, can significantly improve the strategic decision-making process. The positive mediating effect of IIS suggests that while emotional intelligence is crucial, technological tools like IIS can further enhance the decision-making capabilities of top management. This adds a layer of complexity and insight to our understanding of emotional intelligence, showing that it works not only through human interactions but also in synergy with technological innovations in decision-making processes.

On the other hand, A study in 2017 by Salehi & Mohammadi presents a contrasting view by examining emotional intelligence and thinking style in the context of investors' decision-making. The study finds no significant interdependence between emotional intelligence and thinking style, nor a direct effect on decision quality. This lack of relationship contradicts the findings of our study, where emotional intelligence was positively linked to enhanced strategic thinking. This difference could be attributed to the different contexts and subjects of the

studies—while (Salehi & Mohammadi, 2017) focuses on investors, our research examines leadership in a more general organizational context. The discrepancy could also stem from the nature of the decisions involved: strategic decisions made by leaders often involve more complex social dynamics and interpersonal skills, which are where emotional intelligence plays a more evident role. In contrast, investor decision-making may rely more on quantitative and rational analyses, where emotional intelligence and thinking style have a less direct impact on decision outcomes.

In summary, while both Alzoubi & Aziz (2021) and Salehi & Mohammadi (2017) explore aspects of decision-making related to emotional intelligence, they differ in context and scope. (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021) emphasizes enhanced decision quality through the integration of technological systems, while (Salehi & Mohammadi, 2017) highlights the lack of dependency between emotional intelligence and thinking style in investment decisions. Our findings align more closely with those (Alzoubi & Aziz, 2021), supporting the view that emotional intelligence is vital for effective strategic decision-making and leadership.

The results of this study further emphasize the pivotal role that strategic thinking plays in fostering a firm's entrepreneurial orientation, with a significant positive relationship identified. This finding highlights the importance of strategic thinking as a driver of entrepreneurial behavior within organizations. Leaders who are capable of strategic thinking can proactively identify new opportunities, take innovative approaches, and adapt to the rapidly changing business environment. By strengthening their strategic thinking capabilities, leaders not only contribute to the growth of the organization but also cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset across the firm, which is essential for long-term sustainability and competitiveness. Thus, encouraging strategic thinking among leaders becomes a critical factor in enhancing a firm's ability to navigate challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

In comparing these findings with existing research, (Seyedkalali & Heydari, 2016) presents a similar view by showing that enhancing top managers' strategic thinking capabilities directly increases a firm's entrepreneurial orientation. The study emphasizes the importance of managers' strategic thinking skills and their direct effect on the firm's performance through heightened entrepreneurial orientation. This aligns with our conclusion that strategic thinking is a key enabler of an entrepreneurial mindset. Both studies suggest that improving the strategic thinking abilities of top managers can create a positive ripple effect on organizational outcomes, specifically in terms of fostering entrepreneurial behaviors that drive innovation and growth. The findings of (Seyedkalali & Heydari, 2016) further underline the relevance of

strategic thinking in promoting entrepreneurial orientation and encourage firms to invest in developing their managers' strategic skills.

However, (Jelenc, Pisapia, & Ivannii, 2016) offers a nuanced perspective by examining the relationship between strategic thinking capability and entrepreneurial attitude orientation, which includes dimensions such as innovation, personal control, and achievement. This study demonstrates that strategic thinking capability, specifically the ability to engage in reframing, reflecting, and system thinking, significantly influences entrepreneurial attitudes and, ultimately, entrepreneurial activity. The study also highlights that system thinking, in particular, explains the largest portion of the variance in entrepreneurial attitudes. While this research focuses more on individual attitudes and cognitive capabilities rather than organizational outcomes, it complements our findings by showing that strategic thinking, both as a cognitive process and a skill set, plays a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial behaviors. (Jelenc, Pisapia, & Ivannii, 2016) adds depth to our understanding by connecting the development of strategic thinking with educational and training programs, which could further enhance entrepreneurial orientation at an organizational level.

The key difference between the studies lies in the broader focus of (Jelenc, Pisapia, & Ivannii, 2016) on individual entrepreneurial attitudes, whereas our study and (Seyedkalali & Heydari, 2016) focus more on organizational-level outcomes such as entrepreneurial orientation and performance. (Jelenc, Pisapia, & Ivannii, 2016) also emphasizes the role of system thinking, which offers additional insights into the cognitive processes behind entrepreneurial behavior, whereas our study broadly examines the impact of strategic thinking in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset within the firm.

In summary, while both (Seyedkalali & Heydari, 2016) and (Jelenc, Pisapia, & Ivannii, 2016) validate the importance of strategic thinking in enhancing entrepreneurial orientation, our study reinforces this relationship at an organizational level and highlights its practical implications for promoting growth and adaptability in firms. The findings of these studies collectively suggest that developing strategic thinking capabilities is crucial for fostering entrepreneurial behavior, and organizations should prioritize such skill development to enhance their competitive edge.

This study found that the direct relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and firm entrepreneurial orientation was insignificant. Contrary to expectations, emotional intelligence alone did not appear to directly influence the entrepreneurial orientation of the

firm. This suggests that while emotional intelligence is a critical leadership trait for personal and organizational effectiveness, it may not have a direct impact on fostering entrepreneurial behavior within the firm without other complementary factors. One key implication of this finding is the importance of strategic thinking as a mediating factor in this relationship. Emotional intelligence, while beneficial for personal leadership, must be combined with strategic cognitive processes to influence entrepreneurial outcomes. This insight underscores the complexity of entrepreneurial orientation, suggesting that a broader set of capabilities, beyond emotional intelligence, is necessary for fostering a truly entrepreneurial environment within organizations.

When comparing these findings to (Awwad & Ali, 2012), which investigates the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing entrepreneurial orientation, there is a notable contrast. (Awwad & Ali, 2012) finds that managers' emotional intelligence directly impacts the entrepreneurial orientation of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It reports a positive relationship between managers' emotional intelligence, organizational climate, and employees' creativity, which in turn enhances entrepreneurial orientation. This study suggests that emotional intelligence can play a key role in creating an organizational environment conducive to entrepreneurial activity, likely because it enables managers to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and motivate employees toward creativity and innovation. The divergence between this study and our own research suggests that the context, particularly the organizational size and the presence of mediating factors, might influence the direct impact of emotional intelligence on entrepreneurial orientation. Our study indicates that emotional intelligence alone might not suffice and needs to be supported by strategic thinking capabilities to realize its full potential in fostering entrepreneurial outcomes.

On the other hand, (Miao et al., 2018), which explores the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intention through a meta-analysis, presents a broader view that adds another layer to understanding the role of emotional intelligence. This study suggests that emotional intelligence is positively related to entrepreneurial intention, particularly in cultures with a long-term orientation. The positive relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intention highlights that, while emotional intelligence may not directly influence firm-level entrepreneurial orientation in all contexts, it can influence individual entrepreneurial intentions. This distinction underscores the difference between individual entrepreneurial intentions and firm-level entrepreneurial orientation, emphasizing that

emotional intelligence might have a more direct impact on personal entrepreneurial endeavors, such as starting a business, than on the collective entrepreneurial orientation of a firm.

Together, these studies complement our findings by illustrating that emotional intelligence's influence on entrepreneurship is not straightforward and may depend on other factors, such as organizational context, strategic processes, and cultural orientation (Awwad & Ali, 2012) highlights the positive influence of emotional intelligence on organizational climate and creativity, reinforcing the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, whereas (Miao et al., 2018) suggests that emotional intelligence is more strongly connected to individual entrepreneurial intentions, especially in certain cultural settings. Our study contributes to this broader conversation by emphasizing the necessity of integrating emotional intelligence with strategic thinking to realize its full potential in enhancing a firm's entrepreneurial orientation. Thus, while emotional intelligence plays a vital role in entrepreneurship, it requires additional cognitive and strategic capabilities to create meaningful outcomes at the firm level.

This study demonstrates that emotional intelligence influences entrepreneurial orientation indirectly through strategic thinking. While emotional intelligence alone does not directly enhance entrepreneurial orientation, it plays a key role in developing leaders' strategic thinking abilities. These enhanced cognitive capabilities foster an entrepreneurial mindset, which is crucial for organizational growth and innovation. Organizations aiming to promote entrepreneurial behavior should focus on developing both emotional intelligence and strategic thinking in their leaders.

In (Awwad & Ali, 2012), the study finds that emotional intelligence impacts entrepreneurial orientation indirectly, but through organizational climate (OC) and employees' creativity. Here, emotional intelligence fosters a positive climate that encourages creativity, which in turn drives entrepreneurial orientation. This differs from our study, where strategic thinking is identified as the key mediator. While both studies agree on the indirect effect of emotional intelligence, our research highlights strategic thinking as the critical link, suggesting that it is the cognitive processes of leaders that most directly drive entrepreneurial outcomes, rather than the organizational climate or creativity.

The thesis findings reinforce that while emotional intelligence enhances strategic thinking, its direct impact on entrepreneurial orientation may be limited without strategic mediation. This nuanced view enhances the theoretical framework by suggesting that

investment in leadership development should prioritize not only emotional intelligence but also strategic training. This synthesis aligns with literature advocating for the combined influence of emotional and cognitive skills to drive business success, offering a comprehensive understanding of the pathways through which leadership traits affect organizational outcomes.

Recommendations

This study makes significant contributions to the understanding of the relationships between emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and entrepreneurial orientation in leadership. By revealing that leaders' emotional intelligence positively impacts their strategic thinking, which subsequently influences their firm's entrepreneurial orientation, this research offers a novel framework for organizations seeking to enhance their leadership effectiveness. The study's findings emphasize the critical role that emotional intelligence plays in cultivating strategic thinking capabilities among leaders. This is essential, as strategic thinking is not only a cognitive process but also requires emotional insight to navigate complex decision-making scenarios effectively.

The results highlight that while emotional intelligence alone does not directly affect entrepreneurial orientation, it significantly enhances strategic thinking, which acts as a bridge to promote entrepreneurial behavior. This suggests that organizations should not only focus on developing leaders' emotional intelligence but also prioritize the integration of strategic thinking into their training and development programs. This comprehensive approach can enable leaders to leverage their emotional competencies in ways that foster innovation and adaptability within their teams.

Moreover, the research sheds light on the importance of cultivating an organizational culture that values emotional intelligence and strategic thinking. By fostering an environment that encourages open communication, emotional awareness, and strategic dialogue, organizations can empower their leaders to engage in more effective decision-making processes. Such a culture can enhance leaders' ability to identify opportunities, navigate challenges, and respond to dynamic market conditions with agility.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge. First, organizations should consider implementing structured leadership development programs that specifically address emotional intelligence and strategic thinking. Workshops, seminars, and coaching sessions can

provide leaders with the necessary tools and techniques to enhance these competencies. For example, training that focuses on emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills can significantly boost leaders' emotional intelligence, while strategic scenario planning and critical thinking exercises can enhance their strategic thinking abilities.

Second, organizations are encouraged to integrate these competencies into their performance appraisal and promotion criteria. By recognizing and rewarding leaders who demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence and strategic thinking, organizations can signal the importance of these traits and encourage a culture of continuous improvement. This could also include mentorship programs where experienced leaders guide emerging leaders in developing these critical skills.

Lastly, future research should explore additional mediating variables that may influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial orientation. Investigating factors such as organizational culture, team dynamics, and market conditions could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these constructs interact in different contexts. Such insights would be invaluable for both scholars and practitioners aiming to enhance organizational performance through effective leadership. Overall, this study serves as a crucial stepping stone for organizations looking to cultivate leaders capable of driving entrepreneurial success in an increasingly complex business environment.

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