

## Emotional Intelligence and Team Creativity: An empirical investigation of Small and Medium sized enterprises in Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract:** This study aims to examines the link between Emotional Intelligence and team creativity in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia. It attempts to fill the gap in the literature by addressing the question: Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and team creativity in SMEs?. The data were collected through online questionnaires from 476 employees, managers, and owners of small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia . The results show a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and team creativity in SMEs. Results provide practical implications for managers in small and medium enterprises which aid them to design effective strategies that can boost creativity at the team level.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence (EI), Team Creativity, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

### الذكاء العاطفي وإبداع الفريق: دراسة للمنشآت الصغيرة والمتوسطة الحجم في المملكة العربية السعودية

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**المستخلص:** هذه الدراسة تهدف الى اختبار العلاقة بين الذكاء العاطفي وتأثيره على ابداع فريق العمل في المؤسسات متوسطة وصغيرة الحجم في المملكة العربية السعودية، ولقد تم استخدام الاستبانة كأداة للدراسة، حيث تم توزيعها على عينة عدد أفرادها ٤٧٦ موظف، مديرومالك في قطاع الشركات متوسطة وصغيرة الحجم في المملكة العربية السعودية، ولقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة وجود علاقة إيجابية بين أبعاد الذكاء العاطفي و ابداع فريق العمل، ويترتب على نتائج هذه الدراسة بعض التوصيات الهامة للمدراء في قطاع الشركات متوسطة وصغيرة الحجم بحيث يتم تصميم برامج متخصصة تهدف إلى تنمية الابداع لدى العاملين في هذا القطاع .

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الذكاء العاطفي، ابداع فريق العمل، الشركات متوسطة وصغيرة الحجم

## 1. Introduction

Creativity has become an important requirement for firms to achieve a competitive advantage in today's rapidly changing business environment (Dromereschi, 2014; Milohnić and Madžar, 2017). It can be considered as the ultimate economic resource (Milohnić and Madžar, 2017). The importance of developing creativity extends to teams within organizations (Bogdan, 2018). It has been noted that firms

seek to promote creativity within teams in order to achieve desirable outcomes (Chompunuch and Ribière, 2018; Adeel, Batool, & Ali, 2018).

Emotional intelligence has become an important factor which can affect creativity (Carmeli, McKay, and Kaufman, 2014; Olatoye, Akintunde, and Yakasai 2010). Emotional Intelligence can be defined as the way of how people understand, express and manage their emotions and other people's emotions (Maamari & Majdalani, 2017). Awwad and Kada-Ali (2012) maintain that EI can create an environment that motivates growing of trust, information sharing, healthy risk-taking, and learning. Tsai and Lee (2014) found that emotionally intelligent employees can be creative. Rodrigues, Jorge, Pires, and António (2019) indicate that entrepreneurial intention and creativity can be related to problem-solving skills and emotional self-awareness.

This study aims to test the relationship between emotional intelligence and team creativity in small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia. Although previous studies have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity (Carmeli, McKay, and Kaufman, 2014; Olatoye, Akintunde, and Yakasai 2010; Maamari & Majdalani, 2017; Rodrigues, Jorge, Pires, and António, 2019), much less attention has been placed on creativity at the team level. This research contributes to prior literature by addressing the relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity at the team level. Furthermore, few previous studies investigate emotional intelligence and creativity in the context of Saudi Arabia. This study attempts to fill this gap by providing empirical results on the relationship between emotional intelligence and team creativity in Saudi Arabia.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and team creativity in the context of the Saudi market. This includes the following objectives:

- 1- To examine the relationship between Awareness of own emotions (AWR) and team creativity
- 2- To examine the relationship between Management of own emotions (MGT) and team creativity
- 3- To examine the relationship between Awareness of others' emotions (AWRO) and team creativity
- 4- To examine the relationship between Management of others' emotions (MGTO) and team creativity

### 1.2 Research Question

This study attempts to answer the following research question: what is the effect of emotional intelligence on team creativity in SMEs in Saudi Arabia?

### 1.3 Research Significance

This study enriches the knowledge on entrepreneurship by investigating the relationships between dimensions of emotional intelligence and team creativity in the context of SMEs. To the best of our knowledge, this study can be considered the first to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and team creativity in Saudi Arabia. This study also provides insight to practitioners on the mechanism of improving creativity at the team level which in turn can enhance the competitive position of SMEs in the market .

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is about how people comprehend, express and manage their emotions and other people's emotions (Maamari and Majdalani, 2017). EI can create an environment that motivates growing of trust, information sharing, healthy risk-taking, and learning (Awwad & Ali, 2012). Akinboye (2003) described EI as a set of non-cognitive abilities that impact the human ability to achievement in workplace and life in general. Salovey and Mayer (1990) designed a model to explain EI, which has been called the ability model. This model has been acknowledged by the academic community. It contains four abilities includes, perceive emotions, use emotions to ease thoughts, understand and manage emotions. Bar-On introduced EI as including five main constructs, which are the intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood (Maamari and Majdalani, 2017). Barczak *et al.* (2010) conceptualize emotional intelligence to include four main dimensions which are awareness of own emotions (AWR), management of own emotions (MGT), awareness of others' emotions (AWRO), management of others' emotions (MGTO). This conceptualization of EI will be applied in this study.

### 2.2 Team Creativity:

Creativity has been described as a key element of establishing a competitive advantage (Bilton, 2006). Moultrie and Young (2009) defined creativity as the "production of ideas which are new and which apply to defined opportunities". Cherry (2018) claimed that creativity has two components include: Originality "The idea should be something new that is not simply an extension of something else that already exists" and Functionality "The idea needs to actually work or possess some degree of usefulness". At the workplace, creativity is about improving and introducing new ways of doing things (Anderson et al. ,2014).

The importance of developing creativity extends to individuals, organizations, and nations (Bogdan, 2018). Researchers found that innovative and contemporary organizations are seeking approaches to motivate employees and team creativity (Anderson et al., 2014; Chen, Farh, Campbell-Bush, Wu, & Wu, 2013; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Team creativity has been defined as a team of employees

who are working together to produce new and useful ideas of goods, products, processes, and procedures (Shin & Zhou, 2007). It is a collaborative approach of exchanging information and perspectives of to generate new and useful ideas (Paulus, Dzindolet, & Kohn, 2012).

### 3. Conceptual Model

#### Emotional Intelligence & Team Creativity

Mayera *et al.* (1999) suggested that EI can be related to emotional creativity. Olatoye *et al.* (2010) found a positive direct relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity. This indicates that an emotionally intelligent person is probably creative. Ciarrochi *et al.* (2000) suggest that leaders with high EI can evaluate their subordinates' moods, actions, and decisions and the whole organization. Rodrigues *et al.* (2019) found problem-solving skills, emotional self-awareness, and impulse control can affect creativity. Tsai and Lee (2014) maintain that employees who reveal and use their emotions also display significant creativity. Carmeli *et al.* (2014) indicate that that emotionally intelligent employees show creative behaviors. Thus:

H1: Emotional intelligence will be positively related to team creativity

As this study follows Barczak *et al.* (2010)'s conceptualization of emotional intelligence, it includes dimensions of Emotional Intelligence as independent variables. These dimensions are: Awareness of Own Emotions (AWR), Management of Own Emotions (MGT), Awareness of Others' Emotions (AWRO) and Management of Others' Emotions (MGTO).

Therefore, the following hypotheses will be drawn:

H1a: Awareness of own emotions (AWR) will be positively related to team creativity

H1b: Management of own emotions (MGT) will be positively related to team creativity

H1c: Awareness of others' emotions (AWRO) will be positively related to team creativity

H1d: Management of others' emotions (MGTO) will be positively related to team creativity

The hypothesized relationships that the study proposed are shown in Figure 1.

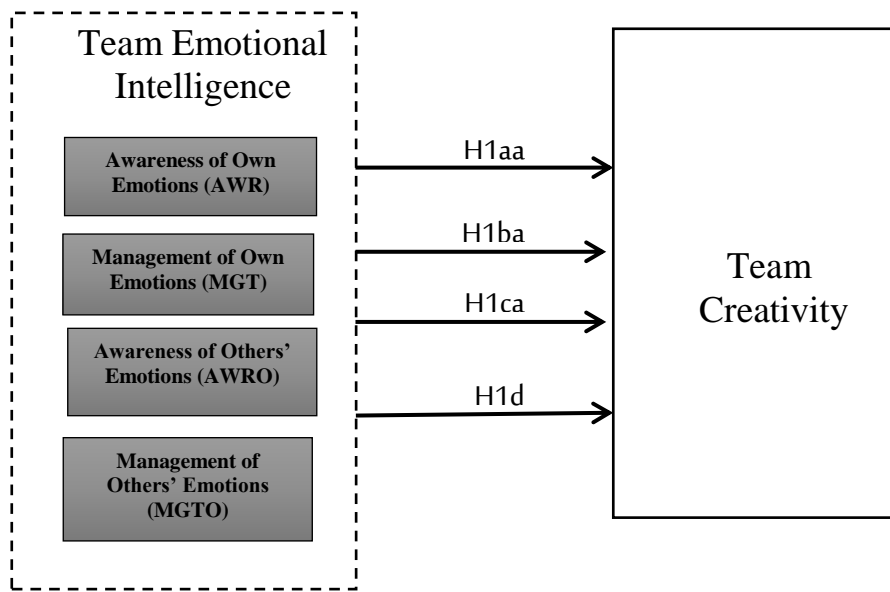


Figure 1: Research Model

#### 4. Method

Quantitative data was collected using the questionnaire tool; which was distributed to the Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs). The total number of SMEs according to General Authority for statistics (2020) is (950,000) in Saudi Arabia. A convenience sampling technique was applied to reach participants and collect the research data. The study sample consists of four hundred and seventy-six (476) respondents from all around The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They were team members of both genders and contained a mix of employees with different positions and titles.

The Questionnaire was distributed online through e-mails and Social Media networks. Respondents were informed that all the answers will stay anonymously and for the research goals only and participation was voluntary. The questionnaire was designed with three sections in this study including company name, age, number of employees, number of members in the team. This study used seven- point Likert scales with 1 indicating total disagreement and 7 indicating complete agreement with the statements of each item. Measurement scale of Team emotional intelligence was adapted from Jordan and Lawrence (2009). It is a four-dimensional scale including (awareness of own emotion, management of own emotion, awareness of others' emotions, and management of others' emotions) with four items for each dimension. Team creativity was measured using 8-item scale which was adapted from Barczak et al. (2010).

## 5. Results

the researcher used the IBM SPSS software to perform the statistical analysis .Table (1) shows distribution of the sample based on number of employees and age of company.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Sample**

Variables	Variable Level	N	%
Number of employees in the company	250 or less	258	54.2
	251- 499	115	24.2
	500 and more	103	21.6
Age of Company	6-10	161	33.8
	11-16	117	24.6
	+16	198	41.6

Statistics in Table (1) show that 54.2% of the sample has “250 or less” employees while (21.64%) of the sample was under the category “500 or more”. In addition, the largest age of the company category of the sample is (+16 years) with (41.6%), and the less percentage is (11-15 years) with (24.58%).

### 5.1 Reliability Test

The coefficient alpha (Cronbach’s alpha) was performed to examine the internal consistency of the research scales. As shown in Table 2, values of coefficient alpha are above the threshold of 0.7. These results indicate that each one of the research scales had an adequate level of reliability.

**Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha**

Reliability Statistics		
Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of statements
Awareness of Own Emotions (AWR)	0.78	4
Management of Own Emotions (MGT)	0.76	4
Awareness of Others’ Emotions (AWRO)	0.70	4
Management of Others’ Emotions (MGT)	0.83	4

### 5.2 Testing the research hypotheses

H1a: Awareness of own emotions (AWR) will be positively related to team creativity

**Table 3: Pearson Correlation coefficients between AWR and team creativity**

		Team creativity
AWR	Pearson Correlation	0.78**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	476
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

From table (3), there is a positive relationship between the independent variable AWR and the dependent variable (team creativity), with the correlation coefficient (78%), which indicate a height positive correlation between AWR and Team creativity.

**Table 4: ANOVA test for the dependent variable (Team creativity)**

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	75.153	1	75.153	61.742	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	576.953	474	1.217		
	Total	652.105	475			

a. Dependent Variable: Team Creativity

b. Predictors: (Constant), AWR

Table (4) confirms that there is a statistical significance with confidence (95%) at level ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) since the (sig.=0.000 < 0.05), and the variable AWR explains (61%) of variance or relation between team creativity variables and AWR. Since the correlation coefficient (78%) is a positive value, so there is a positive relationship between AWR and team creativity.

H1b: Management of own emotions (MGT) will be positively related to team creativity

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation coefficients between MGT and team creativity**

		Team creativity
MGT	Pearson Correlation	0.82 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	476

**\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

From table (5), since (sig. = 0 < 0.05) and correlation coefficient (82%), then there is a positive relation between MGT and team creativity. This indicates a high positive correlate between MGT and Team creativity.

**Table 6: ANOVA test for the dependent variable (Team creativity)**

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	114.189	1	114.189	100.621	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	537.916	474	1.135		
	Total	652.105	475			

a. Dependent Variable: Team Creativity

b. Predictors: (Constant), MGT

Table (6) confirms that there is a statistical significant with confidence (95%) at level ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) since the (sig.=0.000 < 0.05), and the MGT explains (67%) of variance or relation between team creativity

variables and MGT. Since the correlation coefficient (82%) is a positive value, so there is a positive relationship between MGT and team creativity.

H1c: Awareness of others' emotions (AWRO) will be positively related to team creativity

**Table 7: Pearson Correlation coefficients between AWRO and team creativity**

		Team creativity
AWRO	Pearson Correlation	0.81 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	476
<b>**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).</b>		

From table (7), since (sig. = 0 < 0.05) and correlation coefficient (81%), then there is a positive relation between AWRO and team creativity. This indicates a high positive correlate between AWRO and Team creativity.

**Table 8: ANOVA test for the dependent variable (Team creativity)**

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	119.383	1	119.383	106.224	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	532.722	474	1.124		
	Total	652.105	475			

a. Dependent Variable: Team Creativity

b. Predictors: (Constant), AWRO

Table (8) confirms that there is a statistical significance with confidence (95%) at level ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) since the (sig.=0.000 < 0.05), and the variable AWRO explains (66%) of variance or relation between team creativity variables and AWRO. Since the correlation coefficient (81%) is a positive value, there is a positive relationship between AWRO and team creativity.

H1d: Management of others' emotions (MGTO) will be positively related to team creativity

**Table 9: Person Correlation coefficients between MGTO and team creativity**

		Team creativity
MGTO	Pearson Correlation	0.92 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	476
<b>**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).</b>		

From table (9), since (sig. = 0 < 0.05) and correlation coefficient (92%), then there is a positive relationship between MGTO and team creativity.



**Table 10: ANOVA test for the dependent variable (Team creativity)**

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	249.628	1	249.628	293.988	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	402.478	474	0.849		
	Total	652.105	475			

a. Dependent Variable: Team Creativity

b. Predictors: (Constant), MGTO

Table (10) confirms that there is a statistical significant with confidence (95%) at level ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ), *so there is a positive relationship between MGTO and team creativity.*

## 6. Discussion & Implications

This main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity at the team level. Findings of this study proved that there is a positive relationships between emotional intelligence and team creativity. The study found that dimensions of emotional intelligence: awareness of own emotions, management of own emotions, awareness of others' emotions and management of others' emotions have significant associations with team creativity. These results are consistent with those of Olatoye et al. (2010) and Mayer et al. (1999) who found that emotional intelligence has a direct positive relationship with Creativity. It has been argued that emotionally intelligent employees demonstrate a high level of generosity, which in turn nurtures creative behaviors (Carmeli et al., 2014). This study contributes to prior literature by examining the relationships between dimensions of emotional intelligence and team creativity. Few empirical studies have addressed the relationship between emotional intelligence and creativity at the team level.

Managers should foster emotional intelligence among employees to enhance team creativity. Training programs in emotional intelligence can be implemented to improve the level of intelligence for each employee. Managers need to pay special attention towards improving aspects of emotional intelligence: awareness of own emotions, management of own emotions, awareness of others' emotions and management of others' emotions. A continuance assessment of the level of emotional intelligence among employees is required to design suitable training programs that can guarantee an acceptable level of creativity within organization.

This study only examined emotional intelligence as a major determinant of team creativity. Future studies could examine other factors that might affect team creativity. This would enhance the knowledge about emotional intelligence and team creativity particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia.

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