

The Influence of Political Skill and Emotional Intelligence on Student Entrepreneurial Intentions: An Empirical Analysis

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This study examines the relationships of emotional intelligence, political skill, and attitude towards enterprise on entrepreneurial intent. We evaluated 285 undergraduate students enrolled in business courses to assess the effect of these factors on entrepreneurial intentions. Results of these analyses indicate that (1) emotional intelligence and political skill are positively related to one another and (2) the greater the political skill, the stronger the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent in low emotional intelligence conditions. Such results suggest that students, particularly those who possess high political skill, may have stronger intentions to start new businesses.

Research indicates that new business ventures emerge because of planned, purposeful choices made by entrepreneurs (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; Shaver & Scott, 1991). Studies based on the theory of planned behavior, introduced by Ajzen (1987; 1991) draw ties between entrepreneurial intentions and action or behaviors directed at entrepreneurship. Based on the outcomes of this research, it is generally accepted within the entrepreneurship literature that individuals exhibiting strong entrepreneurial intent are more inclined to move beyond the “intent” phase to actually engage in entrepreneurial activities, such as developing a business plan, obtaining a business license, seeking customers, and attracting suppliers.

In studying the formation of entrepreneurial intent and the progression to entrepreneurial activities, items such as emotional range (Bird, 1992), learning about emotion during failure (Shepherd, 2004) and attitudes (Autio, Keeley, Klofsten, Parker, & Hay, 2001) have been cited as important factors in the entrepreneurial process. Ajzen (1987) suggests that a positive attitude towards an activity (i.e., towards enterprise creation) is a proven indicator of the individual’s desire to engage in that activity. Further, it is generally accepted that emotional intelligence can be used to enhance relationships, by recognizing emotion both in oneself and in others (Wong & Law, 2002; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). As an entrepreneur, this skill is very likely desirable since it provides the entrepreneur with the ability to know if he or she, as well as others, are exhibiting emotions, which could shape the potential outcome of a given business situation. Although emotional intelligence accounts for the identification and regulation of emotions, an additional factor, political skill may provide the entrepreneur with the distinct ability to act upon those emotions in a favorable manner; thus, improving the entrepreneur’s opportunity to influence the stakeholder. In the context of this paper, political skill represents an individual’s ability to influence others to achieve ones goals and objectives by understanding others at work (Ahearn et al., 2004). By being able to quickly identify common ground through the emotional recognition process, entrepreneurs with high levels of political skill are likely to influence their targets more effectively than those who lack such ability. This skill garners confidence in the individual that he or she could use to move through the entrepreneurial process from intentions to firm creation.

Attitudes have long been purported to impact entrepreneurial intent (Kruger et al., 2000). However, to our knowledge relatively little research in entrepreneurship has explored the latent entrepreneurial intent of college-aged students. Although directed at secondary students, research by Athayde (2009) presents a new measure to specifically assess the entrepreneurial enterprise potential of young people by analyzing attitude towards enterprise (ATE). While emotional intelligence has been linked to entrepreneurial intent (Zampetakis, Kafetsios, Bouranta, Dewett, & Moustakis, 2009), entrepreneurship

researchers have yet to investigate the influence political skill may exert on the emotional intelligence-entrepreneurial intent relationship. Furthermore, there has been little research to distinguish political skill from emotional intelligence.

The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, political skill, ATE, and entrepreneurial intentions in undergraduate students. Gaining a better understanding of these skills in the context of undergraduate students is relevant for two reasons. First, most undergraduate students are preparing for entry into a challenging job market. For those students who possess the aforementioned skills, they may be more inclined to engage in business start-up due to strong intentions, complimented by other skills such as emotional intelligence and political skill that may offer confidence to move through the entrepreneurial process. Second, the twenty-five and under demographic represents a majority of undergraduate students, which is an untapped source of entrepreneurial creation (Athayde, 2009). In a recent Kaufman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity, individuals with some college and college graduates represent 56 percent of the new ventures started, while 23 percent of new ventures were started by individuals 20-34 in age.

Recognizing entrepreneurial intentions in undergraduate students may improve insight regarding the skills and motives nascent entrepreneurs possess, as well as the potential timing for when college students may plan to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Specifically, we explore whether political skill moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and an individual's entrepreneurial intentions. Political skill examines what is influenced, as well as how or the degree in which the influence occurs. Given this, we are interested in the extent political skill may or may not influence the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intentions. While political behavior has been examined in various contexts, to our knowledge, there has been no theoretical or empirical research conducted which examines political skill from an entrepreneurial perspective. By examining political skill as a moderator we offer more insight into what strengthens or weakens entrepreneurial intentions. In this study, since firm survival is heavily dependent on the entrepreneur and his/her capabilities to effectively influence, we assert that the political skill of the entrepreneur is vital to the firm's success and ultimate survival; thus, to fill this gap in the literature, we examine how the ability to influence (political skill) impacts the relationship between emotional intelligence and individual entrepreneurial intent early on in the entrepreneurial process. While these skills are arguably needed for the firm to survive, we contend that these same skills may attribute to heightened levels of entrepreneurial intentions and subsequently impact the start of the entrepreneurial process. In entrepreneurship and small business research, we often seek to understand why some businesses succeed and why others fail. Examining these skills in college students (potential future entrepreneurs) could offer early insight into explaining the phenomenon of new business failure/success. Furthermore, this research identifies relationships and skills that may need to be integrated into entrepreneurship programs that could benefit potential entrepreneurs.

This study makes three major contributions to entrepreneurship research. First, this work validates the use of the ATE construct developed by Athayde (2009) to more directly assess the enterprise potential of undergraduate students' entrepreneurial intent. Until this study, most of the prior research focused on entrepreneurial intentions of working professionals. In fact, to our knowledge no study, aside from Athayde (2009), has investigated the latent enterprise potential of young people, which is relevant because understanding the attitudes, intentions, and skill sets of young people could be considered an early snap-shot of the future entrepreneur. Second, we introduce the political skill construct to the entrepreneurship literature, which provides a unique variable to explore skills of entrepreneurs. Finally, we identify political skill as a moderator of the emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent relationship, which further explains the association between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we draw from the literature related to entrepreneurial intent, attitudes towards entrepreneurship, emotional intelligence, and political skill, to form hypotheses regarding the relationship of these factors with entrepreneurial intent. Next we detail the methodologies and measures employed in our analyses. Then, we detail the results of our analyses, and finally explore the implications of our findings for both research and practice.

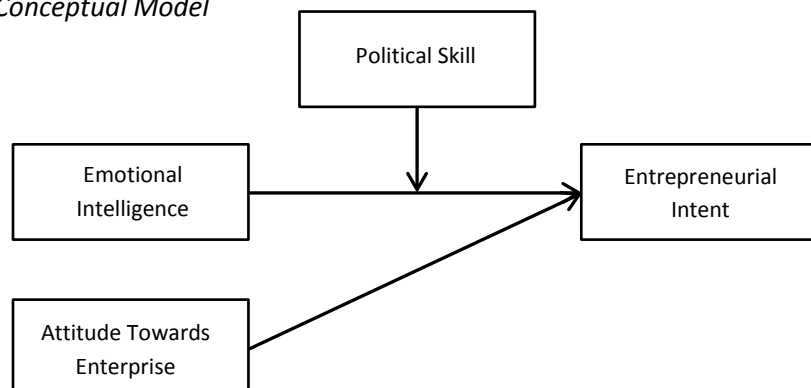
BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENT

Entrepreneurial intent is defined as the conscious and willful desire to create a new business venture (Bird, 1988). Intent represents a mind-set, which is focused and directed towards behaviors and actions associated with the conceptualization and implementation of a business entity. Entrepreneurial intent is considered the first of many steps taken by an individual to create a new venture (Lee & Wong, 2004), with these intentions acting as antecedents to entrepreneurial behaviors or actions (Linan & Chen, 2009). Prior research has provided strong support for the use of intentions to predict actual behavior (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, & Yi, 1989; Shaver & Scott, 1991; Krueger, 1993; Peterman & Kennedy, 2003). In this context, prior research in entrepreneurship has firmly established the link between entrepreneurial intentions and undertaking entrepreneurial activities (Bird, 1988; Krueger, 1993; Krueger et al., 2000). Krueger et al. (2000) expand upon this to state that much of what is considered as entrepreneurial actions in the literature are actually more deliberate, planned behaviors. It is generally recognized that no single variable predicts entrepreneurial behavior and that entrepreneurial intentions are reliable indicators of entrepreneurial behavior. Therefore, we propose the conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1, which is then followed by discussion of attitudes towards enterprise, emotional intelligence, and political skill as well as our hypotheses related to the model. Since intention is considered to be a strong predictor of behavior (Ajzen, 1991), for the purposes of this study, entrepreneurial intent represents the anticipated effort an individual expects to exert in his/her attempt to engage in entrepreneurial behavior.

The conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1 provides a framework for our analysis. As noted in the previous section, there is a strong stream of research examining entrepreneurial intentions. The conceptual model purports to advance this stream of research by focusing on the entrepreneurial intentions of undergraduate students. In particular, with the growth of entrepreneurship programs and increased enrollment in entrepreneurship majors, the conceptual model examines factors that may influence entrepreneurial intentions in undergraduate students. These “soft skills”, such as emotional intelligence and political skill, are often discussed as ‘nice to have’ in business, but we are interested in if they influence entrepreneurial intentions and if so, under what conditions. The conceptual model provides a visual depiction of how we will proceed through our investigation. In what follows next, each independent variable of the conceptual model is discussed.

Figure 1: *The Conceptual Model*



ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENTERPRISE

Attitudes are manifested in three forms: cognitive (beliefs), affective (emotions), and behavior (actions) (Rust & Golombok, 1989). Generally speaking, attitudes do not exist in isolation, but instead are directed towards a subject (Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner, & Hunt, 1991). As such, an individual's attitude towards enterprise may serve as a precursor to that individual's intentions to start a new venture at some point in the future. Prior research has established a link between attitudes and intentions (Zampetakis, et al., 2009; Ajzen, 2001; 1991; 1987; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). A positive attitude towards a behavior, is a strong indicator that the behavior will be enacted (Ajzen, 1991). While past studies have focused on attitudes toward entrepreneurial intentions, few have examined these intentions in the context of the undergraduate student. Undergraduate students, in particular, are of interest given the growth in the number and variations of entrepreneurship educational programs in two and four colleges and universities in the United States (Solomon, 2007). In several European countries, governments are targeting enterprise education initiatives for primary, secondary, and higher education, in efforts to enhance a nation's competitiveness and innovation (Hytti and O'Gorman, 2004). Given these trends, it is necessary to examine what informs undergraduate students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Manifestation of entrepreneurial intentions will take place over time, but we contend that it may begin in college. In order for those manifestations to move beyond the young person's initial intent, we argue that a positive attitude towards enterprise is necessary condition for this to occur. Given this, we expect there to be a positive relationship between a student's attitude and entrepreneurial intentions.

Hypothesis 1: A favorable attitude towards enterprise (ATE) is positively related to entrepreneurial intent.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor and control one's own feelings and emotions, while recognizing and acknowledging feelings and emotions in others. Individuals high in emotional intelligence have the ability to discriminate among these feelings and emotions to process information and take action. In a study examining the effects of emotional intelligence on performance and attitude, Wong and Law (2002) expressed emotional intelligence in four components: 1) appraisal and expression of emotion in the self; 2) appraisal and recognition of emotion in others; 3) regulation of emotion in the self; and 4) use of emotion to facilitate performance.

Individuals possessing the ability to understand and express emotions of the self will sense and acknowledge their own emotions in advance of anyone else. This is relevant to the study of entrepreneurship since individuals with entrepreneurial intentions often become emotionally attached to the notion of starting a business. Their ability to recognize emotion in themselves before others, could provide the entrepreneur a chance to adjust the emotion, if deemed necessary (Zampetakis, et al., 2009). Individuals possessing the ability to perceive and understand the emotions of others around them is relevant because it allows the individual to be sensitive to others. These individuals may also recognize this skill as an advantage for an entrepreneur, which could bolster their intentions to start a business.

Sensitivity allows an individual to appear genuine and sincere to others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). This helps the individual to develop a genuine rapport with others, which may establish a baseline relationship in which influencing could occur. When individuals are able to self-regulate their own emotions, they are more likely to recover faster from psychological distress (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). This is important because individuals with entrepreneurial intentions must develop a "thick skin" to

overcome the many hurdles and setbacks new business owners frequently face. When emotional intelligence is considered as “emotional self-efficacy,” (Zampetakis et al., 2009) then the tie between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent becomes intuitive. In other words, if an individual is confident in his/her ability to regulate his/her own emotions and recognize emotions in others, then he/she will likely feel more competent in taking on the frustrations and struggles associated with being an entrepreneur. Hence, individuals with high emotional intelligence may recognize these skills as advantageous for an entrepreneur, which in turn, strengthens their desire to start a business.

In a study of occupational stress in the workplace, Nikolaou and Tsaousis (2002) suggested that individuals with perceived high emotional intelligence have a greater capacity to manage stress associated with their work environments. The ability to recognize and regulate emotions could be beneficial for individuals who choose the path of entrepreneurship due to the typical frustrations associated with starting a firm (Zampetakis et al., 2009). Maintaining a level-headed approach to the often unstable process of starting a firm may help a potential entrepreneur stay focused on starting the business. Individuals with high emotional intelligence do not let their emotions detract them from their intent to start a business. Instead, this skill instills confidence and increases the likelihood of moving forward.

It is widely accepted that starting a business can be an emotional process due to the uncertainty and investment of personal resources. Considering the possibility of business failure, prior to launching a business could potentially “scare” students away from engaging in the entrepreneurial process (Shepherd, 2004). As an entrepreneur, one must find a way to cope with business failure. Shepherd (2004) suggests that a means to address this issue, particularly in students, is to educate students on the process of managing emotions associated with failures, so that learning can begin to take place to reduce any potential “death anxiety” (p.282). While Shepherd’s call is to educate students in the management of emotions, in order to do so, there must first be awareness of emotions in oneself and in others. Individuals who have high emotional intelligence will likely be better prepared to move past any failure anxiety, which would manifest in strong entrepreneurial intentions. Stated differently, if an individual is confident of his or her abilities to manage the emotions, failure anxiety lessens and the individual is more likely to continue to have strong intentions to start a business. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that emotional intelligence can be linked to entrepreneurial intentions. Given this, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence is positively related to entrepreneurial intent.

POLITICAL SKILL

Political skill is defined as one’s “ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational goals and objectives (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, and Ammeter, 2004: 311). Since organizations, large and small, can be viewed as political arenas (Mintzberg, 1985), understanding the role political skill plays in entrepreneurship may be important for two primary reasons. First, Pfeffer (1981) suggested that political skill is necessary for achieving success. Since entrepreneurs rely heavily on their skills and abilities throughout the entrepreneurial process, it becomes important for them to be able to influence others to gain access to resources for their firms. Second, awareness of people and the surrounding environment are critical elements an individual may use to persuade others to act in favor of the influencer (Ferris et al., 2005). Influencing through persuasion, manipulation, and negotiation becomes a way of life for the entrepreneur both within and outside their respective firms (Mintzberg, 1983). When coupled with emotional intelligence, individuals possessing strong emotional intelligence and strong political skill possess a unique capability to recognize others emotion, adjust his or her approach

to draw them in, and influence them to take a desired action, without coming across as manipulative. Individuals high in political skill possess the confidence and ability to maintain appropriate balance and perspective, as they seek to influence others.

Individuals who are high in political skill exude self-confidence in a manner that conveys a strong sense of security and clarity. Such calm, self-confidence draws others toward the highly politically skilled individual and provides those that are drawn in a sense of comfort and security (Ferris et al., 2005). This skill is desired by most entrepreneurs, yet neither the literature on political skill nor entrepreneurship has suggested any linkages between the two. In each stage of a firm, the entrepreneur is constantly faced with the need to legitimize his or her business. In the nascent stage, the entrepreneur attempts to convince him or herself that the business idea is viable. At this point individuals with low emotional intelligence may “fear” moving forward with the business idea and exhibit low entrepreneurial intentions. However, if that same individual possesses high political skill, a compensating factor may exist, where the individual recognizes that they are emotional, but does not back away from wanting to start a business because they can convince others to invest in the form of committed financing or purchased products.

Individuals who possess high levels of political skill are perceived to know how to influence investors, employees, and customers because they skillfully project their self-confidence onto the different subjects, which makes the attempts to influence appear believable and sincere (Ferris, et al., 2005; Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007). As a result, people are drawn to individuals high in political skill. Individuals with high political skills are masters at the use of emotion. They are capable of exhibiting emotion, when needed, as well as restrain from using it when it may be deemed inappropriate. This intertwining of emotional intelligence and political acts as a critical skill potential entrepreneurs need to increase their confidence about starting a business.

Recognition of affective states in himself/herself and in others may provide an entrepreneur with the foundation needed to establish a rapport with investors, customers, or employees. By understanding where an individual’s emotions may lie, the stage is set for the entrepreneur to influence the investor or employee, because the entrepreneur has a sense of the individual’s mindset. Recognizing the emotions present, an entrepreneur high in both emotional intelligence and political skill could not only know what to do to influence the investor or employee, but when to take action to do so. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Emotional intelligence is positively related to political skill.

DIFFERENTIATING POLITICAL SKILL FROM EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Given the potential close theoretical ties between emotional intelligence and political skill, it is necessary to distinguish between the two constructs. Emotional intelligence is comprised of four elements: (1) appraisal and expression of emotion in the self; (2) appraisal and recognition of emotion in others; (3) regulation of emotion in oneself; and, (4) use of emotion to facilitate performance (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Wong & Law, 2002). In sum, emotional intelligence generally assesses an individual’s ability to appraise, express, recognize, regulate, and use emotions identified in the self and in others. This ability is a combination of self-reflection and recognition of affective states in others, which provides a baseline to act, which we frame as political skill.

Political skill is also comprised of four elements: (1) social astuteness; (2) interpersonal influence; (3) networking ability; and, (4) apparent sincerity (Ferris, et al., 2005). The elements of political skill are concerned with the ability of an individual to influence others. If emotional intelligence is the “who”

and the “what” of a business consideration, political skill is the “when” (choice of timing), “where” (best environment to achieve desired results), and “how” (means of influencing) of the same consideration. From this perspective, individuals who have low emotional intelligence may exhibit low intentions to start a business, because they cannot envision themselves understanding who their customers are or what they may want. On the other hand, individuals who possess high political skill can understand how and where to make the sale, which may compensate for not fully understanding who they will sell to or what they may sell. Given this, we contend that political skill facilitates the use of emotional intelligence to influence a target in a desired manner. Given the four elements of each construct, there is the possibility of item overlap. However, it is expected that several multivariate techniques will address any duplicity without compromising the integrity of each individual construct (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

Given that political skill and emotional intelligence both deal with the individual’s ability to assess himself/herself, as well as the environment, it is feasible to expect that some type of interaction may exist between the two constructs, which could ultimately impact an individual’s level of entrepreneurial intent. Prior research has established a link between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent (Zampetakis et al., 2009; McLaughlin, 2010); however, the political skill construct has not been utilized in the area of entrepreneurship. Individuals who are high in political skill possess a greater ability to skillfully influence others than do those who are low in political skill (Ferris et al., 2005). This ability allows the influencer to fully facilitate the recognition and regulation of emotion to his or her advantage. By complementing the skill of emotional intelligence with political skill, an individual will be better equipped to influence another individual (investor or employee) than someone who does not possess these skills.

Knowledge of these abilities will influence an individual’s entrepreneurial intent because the individual is aware of his or her ability to influence others. Since the process of launching a firm requires a combination of skill, motivation, and confidence to succeed, individuals lacking such confidence are not likely to be motivated to influence others that they are capable of starting and running a business. Therefore, the following hypothesis represents under what conditions we believe political skill to impact the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent:

Hypothesis 4: Political skill will moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent. High political skill will strengthen the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Subjects for this study included 285 undergraduate students (59% male and 41% female) at a large public university located in the Southwest. A survey was administered in upper level undergraduate classes, which included courses in Entrepreneurship, Ethics, Leadership, International Management, and Operations Management. Approximately 76% of students’ ages ranged between 18 to 24 years and 13% of the student age ranges were between 25 and 31 years (See Table 1). Nearly 90% of students were juniors and seniors, which suggests that the majority of students surveyed could face a tough, recovering economy upon graduation; thus, many of these students may soon be faced with the decision of whether to pursue self-employment or wage-employment. College of Business students represented 58% of the respondents, with the remaining respondents reporting majors in the arts and sciences (26%), engineering (9%), and other majors (7%).

Principal components analysis (PCA) was chosen to assess item loadings to ensure each item for a particular construct loaded as expected on the specified construct. PCA was chosen over common factor analysis for two reasons: (1) data reduction was a primary concern to minimize the number of factors needed to account for the maximum portion of the total variance (Hair et al., 2010); and, (2) based on the use of items from previous studies, there was prior knowledge that the specific error variance represented a small portion of the overall total variance (Hair et al., 2010). Athayde (2009) employed exploratory factor analysis to examine the item loadings for the attitudes scale she developed, while Wong and Law (2002) employed these same methods in developing the EI construct. Ferris et al. (2005) likewise employed such analyses. In using PCA, we examine whether our data reveal the same loadings when these items are considered together or whether specific items may be deleted. Brice and Nelson (2008) did not use PCA or EFA for examining their intent items, but we believe employing such measures to be helpful in ensuring parsimony for examining these constructs jointly based on the recommendations of Hair et al (2010).

MEASURES

Entrepreneurial Intentions. The dependent variable in this study for models 3 – 6 is entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial intentions have been used in prior entrepreneurship research primarily as a way to assess an individual's desire to engage in entrepreneurship as a career choice. To measure entrepreneurial intentions, we used four of the original five items from Brice and Nelson (2008). The items created by Brice and Nelson (2008) were adapted from Chen, Greene, and Crick (1998). We retained four of the five adapted items for this analysis. The entrepreneurial intent questions consisted of items that assessed an individual's aspiration to start a business. We used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) and the Cronbach's alpha is 0.91.

Attitude Towards Enterprise. Robinson et al. (1991) developed a measure of attitude to assess entrepreneurial attitude on achievement in business, personal control in business, self-esteem in business, and innovation in business. These dimensions were primarily geared towards the working professional in business. While this has been widely used to assess business professionals, the specifics do not lend themselves to adequate translation for students. Given the place and setting of our sample, we assess students' attitudes towards enterprise. Essentially, we are interested in the latent potential that exists in these young people. The ATE scale developed by Athayde (2009) appears more appropriate for our analysis given the targeted sample of college students. The Athayde ATE scale was created on similar principles as the EAO scale, but it assesses attitudes from the student's perspective. The ATE scale was initially developed to assess enterprise "potential" in students versus actual attitudes in adult entrepreneurs (Athayde, 2009). Athayde argued that students are not likely to have immediate intentions to start a new venture, but since the 18-25 age demographic could be a possible age group to create new firms, gaining a better understanding of their potential is relevant and important.

The ATE consisted of 18 items from the original study conducted by Athayde (2009). After multiple iterations of factor analysis, three distinct factors emerged for ATE. This was somewhat unexpected. We anticipated that the latent ATE construct would consist of four factors. Instead, three independent factors emerged. The first factor contained seven items that assessed leadership. Four items were identified for the second factor representing creativity. The third factor, comprised of three items, measured personal control. Given these results, we listed each as a separate construct: *ATE Leadership*, *ATE Creativity*, and *ATE Personal Control*. The original achievement items did not load above 0.5 to form a separate factor or converge onto another factor. One achievement item loaded with the other leadership items to form *ATE Leadership*. Each of the ATE items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The original Cronbach's alpha score was 0.82. The Cronbach's alpha scores for the new items were as follows: *ATE Leadership* = 0.88, *ATE Creativity* = 0.82, and *ATE Control* = 0.77.

Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence was operationalized by leveraging 16 original items developed by Wong and Law (2002). All 16 of the original items were retained. One additional item from Political Skill loaded with these items. This item represented social astuteness, which loaded with the awareness of others' emotions. Therefore, a total of 17 items emerged to form emotional intelligence. These items represented the following components of emotional intelligence: appraisal and expression of emotion in self, appraisal and expression of emotion in others, regulation of emotions, and use of emotions to facilitate performance. These items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha of this expanded index is 0.91.

Political Skill. Seventeen items for political skill were borrowed from the study conducted by Ferris et al. (2005). The items retained by their study represented the following four components of political skill: network ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity. One item loaded on the emotional intelligence construct, and four items failed to load above 0.5. A total of 12 items from Ferris et al. (2005) remained in use for the political skill construct for this study. Consistent with the other operationalized measures, we used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to measure political skill. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.93. See Table 1 for the averages and correlations of the calculated constructs.

Controls. We controlled for *age, female, ethnicity, major, and income* to account for student demographic characteristics that could plausibly influence a student's entrepreneurial intent. Students twenty-four years of age and younger were a demographic group of particular interest in this study. We used a dummy variable to code for the variable "Age", where a 0 represented all ages, and 1 represented the demographic of interest 24 years of age and under. 76 percent of the sample represented the demographic of interest. More specifically, attitudes and skills within this age group could strengthen or weaken entrepreneurial intentions, which could impact entrepreneurial action. Prior entrepreneurship research has suggested that gender could impact entrepreneurial intent (Wilson, Kickel, & Marlino, 2007), so we included a dummy variable to classify male and female participants to assess differences between genders. Male students were coded as 0 and female students were coded as 1, which yielded a mean of 0.41 for the "Female" variable, which means 41 percent of students were female as shown in Table 1. A student's ethnic background could directly impact one's view of employment and attitudes toward enterprise, therefore, we controlled for it by including the ethnicity of each student. We used white students as the referent group and assigned a dummy variable code of 0. All other ethnicities were coded 1, which produced a mean of 0.37 for the "Ethnicity" variable, which means 37 percent of the participants were not white. We expect that students majoring in entrepreneurship could likely exhibit strong entrepreneurial intent due to their major. To account for major, we created a dummy variable to identify differences associated with entrepreneurship majors. Entrepreneurship majors were coded 1, whereas all other majors were coded as 0. The variable "Major" yielded a mean of 0.08, which means that 8% of the participants were entrepreneurship majors. Family income ranges were included due to the possible effect of family income on a student's attitude towards enterprise and entrepreneurial intent. For example, a student may exhibit a stronger or weaker intent if he or she perceives that his or her family does not possess the financial means to assist with the start of a firm. We used a dummy variable to code for income as well. The referent group were family incomes under \$100,000 and coded 0. Family incomes above \$100,000 were coded 1 and produced a mean for the "Income" variable of 0.27, which means that 27 percent of family incomes exceeded \$100,000 in the sample.

Table 1: *Intercorrelations and Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Age	0.76	0.43										
2 Female	0.41	0.49	0.00									
3 Ethnicity	0.37	0.48	0.13 *	-0.03								
4 Major	0.08	0.28	-0.06	-0.08	-0.03							
5 Income Emotional	0.27	0.44	0.03	-0.02	0.04	0.07						
6 Intelligence Attitude Towards	5.40	0.76	0.03	0.04	0.03	-0.10	0.05					
7 Enterprise Leadership Attitude Towards	4.99	0.98	0.04	0.10	-0.09	0.07	0.03	0.32 **				
8 Enterprise Creativity Attitude Towards	5.63	1.02	0.02	-0.01	0.08	0.05	0.01	0.41 **	0.53 **			
9 Enterprise Control	4.40	1.15	-0.08	-0.15 *	-0.11	0.15 *	0.10	0.09	0.29 **	0.05		
10 Political Skill Entrepreneurial	5.18	0.96	0.03	0.02	-0.02	0.11	-0.01	0.42 **	0.50 **	0.44 **	0.18 *	
11 Intentions	5.06	1.33	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.14 *	0.02	0.37 **	0.25 **	0.33 **	0.16 *	0.43 **

N = 285, * p<0.05, **p<0.01

RESULTS

Reliability testing was conducted on each construct with the retained items. The results are available in Table 2. Upon completing the factor analysis and reliability testing, the remaining items for each construct were summed and then divided by the number of items in the construct. The result provided an average value for each construct. The primary objective of using a summated scale was to create a composite for each construct, which allowed for the use of multiple items (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2: *Measurement Summary Information*

Construct	# of Original Items	Original Cronbach's α	# of Study Items	Study Cronbach's α
Attitude Towards Enterprise	17	.82		
ATE Leadership			7	.88
ATE Creativity			4	.82
ATE Control			3	.77
Emotional Intelligence	16	.80	17	.91
Political Skill	17	.89	12	.93
Entrepreneurial Intent	5	.92	4	.91

In all models, we used hierarchical regression to test the effects of independent variables on the dependent variables emotional intelligence (Models 1-2) and entrepreneurial intentions (Models 3-6). Each of grouping of models first began by entering controls in block one and the independent variable in the next block. We repeated similar steps for assessing the moderator variable political skill (See Table 3).

Table 3: *Hierarchical Regression Analyses*

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Age	0.082	0.065	0.014	0.006	-0.009	-0.029
Female	0.046	0.012	0.032	0.039	0.050	0.082
Ethnicity	-0.043	-0.067	0.041	0.017	0.021	0.110
Major	0.396 *	0.465 **	0.661 **	0.607 **	0.480 *	0.579 **
Income	-0.030	-0.075	0.030	-0.042	-0.007	-0.039
Emotional Intelligence		0.539 ***		0.380 ***	0.277 ***	0.238 ***
ATE Leadership				0.025	-0.100	-0.106
ATE Creativity				0.259 ***	0.197 **	0.150
ATE Control				0.143 *	0.124	0.108
Political Skill					0.395 ***	0.341 ***
Interaction						
Political Skill x Emotional Intelligence						-0.190 ***
R Square	0.015	0.200	0.019	0.206	0.264	0.293
F Change	0.713	55.343	0.952	18.610	18.311	9.737
N	285	285	285	285	285	285

Note: Models 1 - 2 contain the independent variable Emotional Intelligence and the dependent variable Political Skill:

Models 3 - 6 contain Entrepreneurial Intent as the dependent variable

***Significant at $p < 0.01$

** Significant at $p < 0.05$

* Significant at $p < 0.10$

The first analyses examined the relationship between attitudes toward enterprise and entrepreneurial intentions. Hypothesis 1 stated that a favorable ATE is positively related to entrepreneurial intent. Results are presented in Table 3. The factor analysis resulted in three independent factors for ATE. As a result, we examined the relationship of each factor *ATE Leadership*, *ATE Creativity*, and *ATE Control* with entrepreneurial intentions. The results were mixed. In Model 4, *ATE Creativity* ($\beta = 0.259$, $p < 0.05$) and *ATE Control* ($\beta = 0.143$, $p < 0.10$) were significant; whereas, *ATE Leadership* was not found to be significant at any level. As we added the moderating variable in Model 5, *ATE Creativity* ($\beta = 0.197$, $p < 0.05$) remained significant but both *ATE Control* and *ATE Leadership* were not significant at any level. In the fully loaded Model 6, none of the ATE measures were found to be significant.

Hypothesis 2 explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intentions. Results support the hypothesiseis, showing that emotional intelligence was significant in each of the three models run, including Model 6 ($\beta = 0.238$, $p < 0.01$).

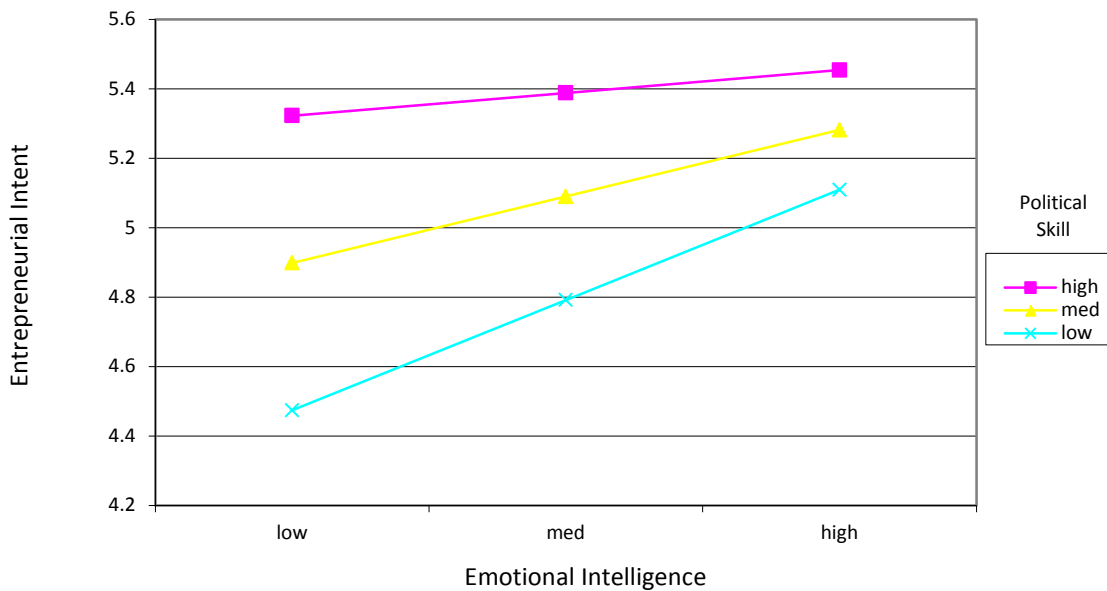
Hypothesis 3 argued that there is a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and political skill. In this analysis, emotional intelligence was the independent variable and political skill was the dependent variable. Results from model 2 support the hypothesis, showing a positive effect of emotional intelligence on political skill ($\beta = 0.539$, $p < 0.01$).

To test for the moderating effect of political skill on the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent, an interaction term for emotional intelligence and political skill was created. Political skill was split into three categories: low political skill, neutral political skill, and high political skill. Low political skill was established as the mean minus one standard deviation and lower. Neutral

political skill ranged between minus one standard deviation from the mean and plus one standard deviation from the mean. High political skill was assessed at the mean plus one standard deviation and higher. Consistent with recommendations by Aiken and West (1991), a hierarchical regression was run to introduce the standardized interaction variable. To eliminate potential issues with multicollinearity created by the development of the interaction variable, we centered and standardized the data (Aiken & West, 1991). Due to the difficulty of analyzing moderator variables, we also graphed the moderating effects of political skill on the emotional intelligence-entrepreneurial intent relationship. The graph (see Figure 2.) depicts emotional intelligence on the x-axis and entrepreneurial intentions on the y-axis. Results present in Table 3, Model 6 support that there is a significant relationship, but not in the hypothesized direction ($\beta = -0.190, p < 0.01$). Figure 2 supports the results from Table 3 by illustrating a significant relationship in the low emotional intelligence area, but not in the high emotional intelligence area.

With regards to the control variables, only major exhibited a significant effect. Unsurprisingly, students who had declared an entrepreneurship major held a positive and significant relationship with entrepreneurial intent. Thus, those who had publicly declared an interest in entrepreneurship appear more likely to believe they will dedicate the time, energy, and resources to starting a business. Perhaps more surprisingly, age, female, nor income were found to be significant influences of entrepreneurial intent.

Figure 2: Interaction Plot of Entrepreneurial Intent as Outcome, Emotional Intelligence as Independent Variable, and Political Skill as Moderating Variable.



DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study was designed to empirically examine the relationships among attitudes toward enterprise (ATE), emotional intelligence, and political skill on entrepreneurial intentions for undergraduate students. Previous research by Athayde (2009) developed a new measure to specifically assess the enterprise potential of young people by assessing ATE, which we used to assess college students' attitudes toward enterprise. Mixed results were found in various model cycles for ATE. In the fully loaded model (Model 6), none of the ATE measures were found to be significant. This was

somewhat unexpected. Since the ATE construct was developed to assess the latent enterprise potential of young people, we hypothesized that a positive significant relationship would exist. Even with the emergence of three distinct factors for ATE (*ATE Leadership, ATE Creativity, and ATE Control*), we expected to see a significant positive relationship. In review of the analysis, it would appear that when the political skill construct was entered into the model, the ATE factors were no longer significant. This could account for the unexpected insignificant findings. A closer examination of the specific items used for ATE and political skill is needed to further explain these changes.

Further, our findings suggest that emotional intelligence and political skill are directly related. The findings of a direct, significant relationship between emotional intelligence and political skill suggests that individuals who have self-awareness of their own emotions and are aware of others' emotions can and will use this information to achieve personal or desired organizational goals and objectives. This self-awareness and awareness of others' emotions, allow the individual to know when and how to use information to influence a given outcome.

This study confirmed that emotional intelligence is related to entrepreneurial intentions (Zampetakis et al., 2009; McLaughlin, 2010). A relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intentions is in line with the recommendations by Shepherd (2004), which suggested that students should be educated on the management of emotion. Shepherd's work specifically focuses on the use of emotion to move past business failure anxiety. However, the management of emotion could also be a necessary but not sufficient condition to move through initial intentions on to entrepreneurial behavior (actions). Entrepreneurial intentions are manifested in an individual's attitude (Robinson et al., 1991; Athayde, 2009). If the individual does not possess the ability to manage the emotions associated with an attitude, positive progression, in this case a move from attitudes to action, is unlikely.

Unique to this study, political skill was found to moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent, but not in the hypothesized direction. From Figure 2, we can assert that political skill matters most when emotional intelligence is low. Figure 2 depicts the greatest amount of variance in the emotional intelligence-entrepreneurial intentions relationship when political skill is high and emotional intelligence is low. High political skill appears to compensate for low emotional intelligence by maintaining a high level of entrepreneurial intentions. Possessing emotional intelligence allows the entrepreneur to recognize and acknowledge emotions in others as well as himself/herself. Political skill assists the entrepreneur with facilitating the critical actions needed for using those emotions in a manner that is beneficial to the entrepreneur. The ability to skillfully influence others in a sincere manner gives the entrepreneur confidence in his or her ability to act upon the intentions of creating a new business.

Exploration of the role of moderators and mediators of the entrepreneurial behaviors is an important component of moving this field forward. We have chosen to explore the role of political skill as a moderator of the emotional intelligence-entrepreneurial intentions relationship, and have found support for the moderating role of political skill. Entrepreneurship has been sufficiently linked to economic development across the globe. Future research investigating factors that impact entrepreneur decision making will shed additional light on how to provide researchers and entrepreneurs with more insightful information regarding entrepreneur behaviors. Utilizing political skill as a means to assess entrepreneurs' decision-making capability may yield some interesting and useful answers. Tornikoski & Newbert (2007) suggested that navigating the entrepreneurial process is more about what entrepreneurs do, versus who they are. While we are largely in agreement with this notion, "who they are" is a package of what they believe and the skills they possess. Understanding those skills and beliefs, such as emotional intelligence and political skill, may provide more insight into why entrepreneurs do what they do.

With the growth of entrepreneurship programs around the world, assessing students within these programs and those interested in enrolling in an entrepreneurship program is certainly relevant. The current theoretical arguments in the literature do not adequately explain all potential groups of entrepreneurs. Assessing attitudes of young people could be used to thoroughly theorize the underlying drivers of interest in these programs. Until recently, the focus of entrepreneurship research has been focused on practicing entrepreneurs, and rightfully so. However, peering into the future by actively assessing potential entrepreneurs could provide additional insight into the phenomenon of rapid entrepreneurship program expansion. Early engagement of potential entrepreneurs could lead to the closure of gaps between those who have intentions and those who actually start businesses. Given the extant research in entrepreneurship, researchers are still looking for answers pertaining to the high failure rate of new businesses. Perhaps some of the variance associated with these failures could be explained by increased theory bases associated with young people with entrepreneurial intentions.

PRATICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study can be used to enhance entrepreneurship education programs by encouraging the conscious development of softer skills such as political skill and emotional intelligence. In our study, students high in political skill had stronger entrepreneurial intentions. This suggests that business programs may want to find ways to enhance the awareness and level of these skills in students. Expanding the entrepreneurial program of study will provide an additional diverse learning experience for students, which has been found to promote greater entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). A second practical implication pertains to practicing awareness related to the entrepreneurial skill set. If a business owner has knowledge of a deficient skill, he or she can identify areas in need of improvement. This may have practical implications on entrepreneur training. Universities and small business development centers could create programs to enhance the entrepreneur's human and social skills. Understanding the emotional intelligence and political skill inventories of these individuals could provide a foundation for building such programs.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Our results are best viewed with the limitations of our study and analyses in mind. One limitation of this study is the use of a student sample. However, we contend that a student sample is relevant to this particular study because current undergraduate students represent a significant potential source of future entrepreneurs. Further, there is support for the use of student samples in the literature (e.g., Athayde, 2009; Brice and Nelson, 2009; Wong and Law, 2002). We argue that the latent enterprise potential of students provide support for utilizing a student sample. More than 47% of the students indicated that they seriously planned to start a business, but that it would be at least three years before they would be able to do so. Future studies should assess the study variables in recent college graduates who aspire to start their own firms.

A second limitation is the possibility of self-report bias. Generally speaking, self-reported measures are quite accurate provided the behavior of interest is not of a sensitive or private nature (Ajzen, 1987). The questions used in this study did not pertain to sensitive matters and only focused on undergraduate students' basic demographic data, entrepreneurial intent, emotional intelligence, political skill, and attitudes toward enterprise. Future research should consider collecting data (with student permission) from other instructors about participants in the study in addition to collecting self-report data. This will provide an additional source of information that may be in a position to offer a view point of a student's emotional intelligence, political skill, and/or enterprising behaviors.

CONCLUSION

Young entrepreneurs are an important source of economic development, and relatively little research exists explicating what factors may drive young peoples' intentions to start a business. Prior research suggests that emotional intelligence and attitudes towards entrepreneurship may be tied to the intentions to start a business. We assess the influence of these constructs on entrepreneurial intent. Further, since emotional intelligence has been tied to intent, we hypothesized that greater levels of political skill, which leverages emotional intelligence through persuasion, will strengthen the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intentions.

We find that emotional intelligence and political skill are positively related to one another, and that higher levels of political skill strengthen the association between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intent under conditions where emotional intelligence is low. Such a result suggests that there may be a compensating mechanism between emotional intelligence and political skill. Our results suggest that developing both the emotional intelligence and political skill of undergraduate students may benefit those students who is considering entry into the entrepreneurial process.

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