

The Effect of Emotional Intelligence and Resilience on Anxiety in the Covid-19 Pandemic situation in MSME Entrepreneurs in Indonesia

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Abstract

MSME entrepreneurs are individuals who own micro, small, and medium enterprises. They were among those significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The conditions during the pandemic had psychological impacts, including increased levels of anxiety. This study aims to examine the effects of emotional intelligence and resilience on anxiety among MSME entrepreneurs. The sample comprised 105 MSME entrepreneurs who have been running their businesses for at least one year. Data were collected using an online structured questionnaire. This research employed a quantitative approach with multiple regression analysis. The results indicated that emotional intelligence and resilience account for 15.1% of the variance in anxiety levels among MSME entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, Anxiety, MSME Entrepreneurs, Indonesia

Introduction

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a novel strain of coronavirus (WHO, 2019). This virus and the disease it induces were previously unknown until their identification during an outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. As of now, COVID-19 had evolved into a global pandemic, affecting numerous countries worldwide during 2020 to 2022, including Indonesia.

Transmission of the virus primarily occurs from individuals who are already infected (WHO, 2019). It spreads through respiratory droplets released from the nose or mouth when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Consequently, maintaining a minimum distance of one meter from others is crucial. These droplets can also settle on surfaces such as tables, door handles, and handrails. People may contract the virus by touching these contaminated surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. Hence, regular handwashing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, is essential.

In April 2020, the Indonesian government implemented the Large-Scale Social Restrictions policy to curb the spread of COVID-19. This policy particularly impacted MSMEs operating in crowded and public spaces (Aminah, 2020). The Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association (HIPMI) reported an average sales decline of 30% among MSMEs, attributed to the PSBB measures that led people to avoid crowded locations such as malls, restaurants, and coffee shops.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had significant psychological effects on the community (WHO, 2020). As a severe stressor, it has heightened anxiety levels, which is a common response during crises. Anxiety is generally characterized by a state of fear or unease (Nevid, Rathus, & Greene, 2018). It manifests through a range of symptoms, including physical, behavioral, and cognitive indicators. Physical symptoms may involve

trembling, chest or abdominal tightness, excessive sweating, dizziness, dry mouth or throat, shortness of breath, palpitations, and nausea. Behavioral symptoms can include avoidance, dependence, and agitation. Cognitive symptoms often consist of excessive worry, fear about the future, overthinking, hyper-vigilance, fear of losing control, intrusive thoughts, and difficulties in concentrating.

The level of anxiety experienced by individuals can vary depending on several related factors. Various factors, including demographic variables, can influence anxiety related to a pandemic (Goodwin, Gaines, Myers, & Neto, 2011). Additionally, perceptions of exposure risk may also affect anxiety levels.

Research by Hatijah (2018) suggests that resilience can impact anxiety levels. The study indicated that higher resilience is associated with lower anxiety. Similarly, Hjemdal, Vogel, Solem, Hagen, and Stiles (2010) conducted research on resilience, finding that higher resilience scores were predictive of lower levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms. Resilience is a fundamental construct that provides the strength to help individuals recover and grow from adversity (Pettersson & Kelleher, 2005). It can also be defined as an individual's ability to cope with life challenges while maintaining good health and energy.

In addition to resilience, emotional intelligence can also influence anxiety. According to Pradnyaswari and Budisetyani (2018), their study found a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and anxiety. Higher levels of emotional intelligence were associated with lower levels of anxiety. Fikry and Khairani (2017) also found a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and anxiety among students undergoing thesis guidance, suggesting that individuals with higher emotional intelligence experience lower levels of anxiety.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effects of emotional intelligence and resilience on anxiety among MSME entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Methods

The study sample comprised 105 MSME entrepreneurs who have owned and operated their businesses for a minimum of one year. The sampling method employed was purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific criteria defined by the researcher (Sugiyono, 2013). Data were collected through an online structured questionnaire using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Multiple regression analysis was used for data analysis.

Anxiety was measured using the Fear of COVID-19 Scale developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020), which includes 10 items. The emotional intelligence scale was adapted from Wijayanti (2011), based on Salovey's framework (as cited in Goleman, 2014), and covers aspects such as self-awareness of emotions, emotional regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and relationship management.

The resilience scale was adapted from Setyaningsih (2011) and is based on Grotberg's (2005) model, which includes dimensions of personal strength (I am), interpersonal capability (I can), and external support and resources (I have).

Result and Discussion

The result of this study reveal significant findings regarding the impact of emotional intelligence and resilience on anxiety among MSME entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis demonstrates that both emotional intelligence and resilience play crucial roles in influencing anxiety levels, with each variable accounting for a notable portion of the variance in anxiety.

In Table 1. Presents the results of the regression analysis examining the impact of emotional intelligence on anxiety. The F-value obtained is 17.444, with a significance level of 0.001 ($p \leq 0.01$), indicating a

statistically significant effect of emotional intelligence on anxiety. Additionally, the R-squared value is 0.145, which suggests that emotional intelligence accounts for 14.5% of the variance in anxiety levels.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Test of Emotional Intelligence on Anxiety

Variabel	F	Sig	ρ	R Square
Emotional Intelligence on Anxiety	17,444	0,001	$\leq 0,01$	0,145

In Table 2. Presents the results of the regression analysis examining the impact of resilience on anxiety. The F-value is 7.312, with a significance level of 0.001 ($p \leq 0.01$), indicating a statistically significant effect of resilience on anxiety. The R-squared value is 0.066, suggesting that resilience accounts for 6.6% of the variance in anxiety levels.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Test of Resilience on Anxiety

Variabel	F	Sig	ρ	R Square
Resilience on Anxiety	7,312	0,001	$\leq 0,01$	0,066

In Table 3. Presents the results of the regression analysis examining the impact of emotional intelligence and resilience on anxiety. The findings indicate that both emotional intelligence and resilience significantly influence anxiety. The R-squared value of 0.151 signifies that these variables collectively account for 15.1% of the variance in anxiety, while the remaining 84.9% is attributed to other factors not explored in this study.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Test of Emotional Intelligence and Resilience on Anxiety

Variabel	F	Sig	ρ	R Square
Emotional Intelligence and Resilience on Anxiety	9,063	0,001	$\leq 0,01$	0,151

In Table 4. Shows that the anxiety variable has an empirical mean score of 21.80, indicating that the level of anxiety among MSME entrepreneurs in this study falls within the moderate range. Conversely, the two variables influencing anxiety—emotional intelligence and resilience—are classified in the high range, with empirical mean scores of 48.7 and 114.67, respectively.

Table 4. Empirical and Hypothetical Means for All Variables

Variabel	Empirical Mean	Hypothetical Mean	Empirical Standard Deviation	Hypothetical Standard Deviation	Category
Anxiety	21,80	25	4,827	5	Medium
Emotional Intelligence	48,7	40	5,274	8	High
Resilience	114,67	90	10,328	18	High

This study exposed the influence of emotional competence and resilience anxiety levels of MSME entrepreneurs amid COVID 19 pandemic, also showed that both emotional intelligence and resilience were effective predictors of anxiety levels such that 14.5% of variance in anxiety was attributed to emotional intelligence while 6.6% was explained by resilience. Such findings are in line with the existing empirical literature which also seeks to explain the anxiety levels through construal of emotional and psychological parameters even more so during times of chaos like a pandemic.

The growing body of evidence regarding the effect of emotional intelligence on anxiety is consistent with these findings. For example, the research of Pradnyaswari and Budisetyani (2018) proved that better emotional intelligence relates to less anxiety, hence validating our finding. Likewise, in the work of Tsaousis and Ggedik (2020) emotional intelligence acted as a buffer for anxiety confirming our results that emotional regulation and awareness of self management as relief for stressful conditions helps alleviate anxiety.

As seen, resilience also aligns with other studies that have pointed out anxiety and its predictors. For instance, in the research conducted by Youssef and Luthans (2012), and more recent studies, including Kumpfer in 2019 and Avey, Wernsing and Luthans (2010), there is a tendency to emphasize resilience as one of the factors that serve as protection from psychological stress and enhances its adaptive response. Similar to these studies, this study shows that 6.6% of the variance in anxiety is explained by resilience, thereby supporting the assertion that resilience is essential in functioning under adverse situations

The active interaction of emotional intelligence and resilience in relation to anxiety which accounted for 15.1 % of the variance indicates that although these variable factors are critical still there are other variables not captured in the current study which are likely to impact on anxiety. This is consistent with other reviewers who have commented on the multiple dimensionality of anxiety eg Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts (2012). Other factors that should be considered in relation to anxiety in MSME entrepreneurs include social support, coping styles, and personality traits and this will guide subsequent studies in that aspect.

This research is also important for practical application purposes. For instance, in the context of MSME entrepreneurs the international regulation of COVID-19 may challenge ways of operating, and, therefore, enhancing emotional intelligence and resilience may work well in this difficulty. In particular, these concerns relate to the risk factors related to the losses in the economy or the uncertainty in the business sphere. Some of such interventions may focus on these capabilities to assist the entrepreneurs in overcoming these difficulties with certainty.

Notable exceptions should also be born in mind, if only because of the limitations of this research. Firstly, the sample size and geography of the chosen population were relatively small and narrow, which might impact the ability to generalize the findings. In addition, the present research leaves room for further quantitative studies using larger and more representative samples.

To conclude, the outcomes of the present study illuminate how emotional intelligence and resilience of the MSME entrepreneurs work to reduce the level of anxiety through their effects. These findings are congruent with the latest publication and highlights the role of the psychological aspects in the management of anxiety during high-stress periods.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study underscores the significant impact of emotional intelligence and resilience on anxiety among MSME entrepreneurs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings indicate that emotional intelligence and resilience collectively account for 15.1% of the variance in anxiety levels, highlighting their crucial roles in mitigating stress. These results suggest that enhancing emotional intelligence and resilience can be effective

strategies for managing anxiety in high-stress situations. Future research should explore additional factors and expand the sample to further elucidate the complexities of anxiety in entrepreneurial settings.

Based on the discussion of the research findings, it is recommended that during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals should prioritize maintaining their health and maintaining a positive outlook. For MSME entrepreneurs particularly impacted by the pandemic, it is crucial to focus on innovation within their business operations. For future research, academics are advised to consider incorporating additional variables that may influence anxiety. Moreover, expanding the research scope to include a larger sample size could provide more comprehensive insight.

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