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Article

Emotional Agility and Social Intelligence: Unravelling Entrepreneurs' Behavior in Omani SMEs

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Abstract: Emotional agility and social intelligence at small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can be an invigorating experience, filled with opportunities for growth, innovation, and collaboration. This research aims to investigate the Omani entrepreneurs' emotions and intelligence at workplace through self-experiences in SMEs. A sample of 222 Omani entrepreneurs participated in online survey that was designed to attain the objectives of this research. Data was collected using google drive and analyzed using multiple regression path analysis. The results revealed that emotional agility and social intelligence have positive and significant impact on employee thriving at work in Omani SMEs. Further, openness to experience mediates the relationships between entrepreneurs' emotions and intelligence and sustainable workplace. These results confirm the effective role of openness to experience among Omani entrepreneurs where they should adopt new strategies and techniques to improve their skills and support their SMEs. This research highlighted the role of interpersonal skills including agility and intelligence of entrepreneurs in Arab context.

Keywords: emotional agility; social intelligence; openness to experience; thriving at workplace; SMEs; Omani entrepreneurs

1. Introduction

The integration of technology into the workplace has completely redesigned operational procedures, customer behaviors, and expectations with advantages including enhanced communication, teamwork, security precautions, productivity, and efficiency [1]. The digital workplace also prioritizes enhancing the employees experience through the technology-driven recognition, promotions and rewards programs [2]. Based on that technology and artificial intelligence have been changing workplace continuously during last a few years, it is significant to investigate employee behavior, intelligence and sustainable workplace. Organizations should be investing in their human resources and depend on technology into their daily operations to achieve stable and sustainable. [3]. This study aims to investigate the emotional agility, social intelligence and openness to experience of employee at workplace.

Employees that have emotional agility are better able to control their emotions at work, which improves wellbeing and productivity in the long run. [4]. Through the cultivation of emotional agility and self-awareness, people can better be understanding and enhance their comprehension of their emotions, manage their responses, and resolutely adjust to difficult situations [5]. This ability to manage emotions not only promotes healthier relationships with colleagues, but also improves decision-making and problem-solving skills [6]. Employees that show emotional agility are more likely to appear feeling happier at work, being less stressed, and having better mental health [7]. integration strategies that enhance emotional agility into corporate culture can, in general, result in a more favorable workplace where staff members can thrive on a personal and professional level.

On another hand, social intelligence plays a vital role in creating a comfortable and healthy workplace and thus encourages employee success [8]. Research on social intelligence was initiated by Thorndike and presented a threefold classification with three dimensions of intelligence: social intelligence, mechanical intelligence and abstract intelligence; Mechanical intelligence refers to the ability to use materials, tools and devices, abstract intelligence refers to theoretical behavior and the ability to use symbols, verbs and forms, and social intelligence refers to intelligent interaction with others [9]. Employees who have high social intelligence are able to engage with others, communicate clearly, and manage relationships with others [10]. Their ability to control emotions and connect with others allows them to build trusting relationships with their colleagues, comprehend other viewpoints, and constructively settle disagreements. Employers may foster a supportive work environment where people feel appreciated and respected, encourage cooperation, and increase productivity by helping staff members develop their social intelligence. Additionally, Employee engagement, job welfare, and general well-being are more common between those with strong social intelligence. Investing in training courses and projects that emphasize social intelligence development may support performance, raise employee retention rates, and enhancing the organization's chances of success.

Moreover, studies have consistently demonstrated that employees who are very receptive to openness to experience tend to thrive in their workplaces. This personality characteristic, which is marked by inventiveness, curiosity, and a desire to try new things, makes it easier for people to adjust to changes in the workplace and approach difficulties with excitement rather than fear [11]. Employees that are receptive to open to experiences are more inclined to seek for fresh chances for personal development, take the lead on tasks, and participate in ongoing education [12]. Furthermore, individuals who possess this open to experiences are frequently better able to work cooperatively with coworkers who have different backgrounds and viewpoints, which enhances team dynamics and the culture of the company as a whole [13]. Organizations may produce a workforce that flourishes both individually and collectively by creating an atmosphere that promotes openness to experience among employees through professional development opportunities and for people to express their creativity.

In conclusion, in the modern technology-based workplace, employees are faced with numerous challenges that can impact their productivity and overall job satisfaction, one of the key challenges is keeping up with rapidly changing technologies and software applications [14]. As technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, employees must constantly learn new systems and adapt to updated processes in order to stay competitive and efficient in their roles where this impacts their emotions and social life [15]. Additionally, the increased reliance on technology has blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to potential burnout and decreased work-life balance for many employees [16]. Furthermore, communication breakdowns can occur when relying solely on virtual interactions through email or messaging platforms, leading to misunderstandings and lack of clarity among team members [17]. In order to address these challenges effectively, employers must provide ongoing training opportunities, promote a healthy work-life balance, and encourage open communication channels within their organizations. Based on this literature, the main contributions of this study include:

- Contribution to Omani SMEs through raising the awareness of emotional agility, social intelligence and openness to experience and the factors that need special attention to obtain positive and effective work teams that contribute to the growth of the SMEs activities.
- Enriching the literature on emotional agility, social intelligence and openness to experience, by exploring the potential effects of these variables on the success and sustainability of organizations, especially SMEs.
- On the personal side, this research provides the employee knowledge and need for more personal development to improve performance and achieve SMEs objectives.
- The research results also will provide evidence from Arab context regarding SMEs and entrepreneurs and highlight the challenges and advantages they have.

2. Literature Review

2.1. SMEs in Arab and Omani Context

In the Arab world, including Oman, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in economic development and employment growth. These enterprises are essential for creating jobs and diversifying economies. However, challenges such as limited access to finance, productive capacity, and a favorable business environment hinder their growth. Governments in the region have recognized the significance of SMEs and have taken steps to support their development, although efforts have been somewhat fragmented [18]. In Oman specifically, the government has been actively supporting the SME sector, with over 40,000 SMEs registered and a growing number each year, where the definition of SMEs in Oman is based on the number of workers and annual sales, with micro, small, and medium enterprises categorized accordingly [19]. Despite the growth of SMEs in Oman, there are still challenges that impede their expansion, such as the lack of comprehensive market research and obstacles to sustainable growth.

2.2. Emotional Agility and Openness to Experience

Emotional agility refers to one's ability to navigate through difficult emotions, thoughts, and situations with grace and resilience [20]. It involves being open to experiencing a wide range of emotions without becoming overwhelmed or reactive, and instead using them as valuable information for personal growth and decision-making. Openness to experience is a personality trait associated with curiosity, flexibility, and an appreciation for new ideas and experiences [21]. In a professional context, emotional agility and openness to experience can be powerful tools for self-awareness, relationship-building, and effective leadership. Leaders who possess these qualities are able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances, communicate effectively with their team members, and foster an inclusive work environment where different perspectives are valued [22]. By cultivating emotional agility and openness to experience in the workplace, individuals can enhance their overall effectiveness as professionals.

Emotional agility is a crucial skill in the workplace, enabling individuals to manage their thoughts and feelings effectively, leading to improved business success [7]. It involves recognizing patterns, labeling thoughts and emotions, accepting them, and acting on one's values [23]. Leaders who exhibit emotional agility create a positive workplace culture that fosters resilience and openness. By embracing emotional agility, individuals can navigate difficult emotions, make rational decisions, and enhance their leadership impact [24]. For Employees: Emotional agility allows employees to be fully present, open to experiences, and better equipped to interact with others and progress in their careers. For Leaders: Leaders with emotional agility can lead by example, understand their employees better, and create a supportive environment that promotes success and value in the workplace [20]. In summary, fostering emotional agility in the workplace is essential for creating a psychologically safe environment where individuals can navigate emotions effectively, make informed decisions, and drive success both personally and organizationally. Leaders play a pivotal role in promoting emotional agility by modeling this behavior and creating a culture that values emotional intelligence alongside traditional skills. In light of this literature, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H₁: Emotional agility has positive impact on openness to experience.

2.3. Social Intelligence and Openness to Experience

Social intelligence and openness to experience are two key factors that can significantly impact an individual's professional success. Social intelligence refers to the ability to navigate social situations effectively, understanding others' emotions and intentions, and building strong relationships with colleagues and clients [25]. This skill is crucial in a professional setting as it enables individuals to collaborate effectively, resolve conflicts efficiently, and influence others positively. On the other hand, openness to experience is the degree to which a person is open-minded, curious,

imaginative, and creative-minded [26]. Openness to experience involves being curious, flexible, and willing to embrace new ideas and experiences. Professionals who are open-minded tend to be more creative, adaptable, and innovative in their work, which can lead to better problem-solving skills and increased job satisfaction [27].

In addition, social intelligence refers to the ability to understand and navigate social situations effectively, whether it be networking with colleagues or resolving conflicts within a team [28]. Individuals with high social intelligence are adept at reading nonverbal cues, understanding group dynamics, and building strong relationships with others [29]. On the other hand, Openness to experience is a key dimension of the Fifth Personality Model as mentioned by [30]. Openness to experience involves being receptive to new ideas, experiences, and challenges. Individuals who exhibit openness are more likely to adapt to change, think creatively, and continuously improve themselves [31].

By combining social intelligence with openness to experience, Individuals can enhance their interpersonal skills, build stronger connections with others, and foster a more inclusive and collaborative work environment. Considering the literature, the second hypothesis was designed as follows:

H₂: Social intelligence has a positive impact on openness to experience.

2.4. Emotional Agility and Employees Thriving at work

Emotional agility is about the ability of employees to navigate their emotions and adapt to challenging situations in the workplace. This skill is crucial for fostering resilience, productivity, and overall well-being among employees. When individuals are emotionally agile, they are better equipped to handle stress, communicate effectively with colleagues, and maintain a positive attitude even in the face of adversity as well as how individuals navigate their thoughts, feelings, and self-talk ultimately determines their success. Employees who possess emotional agility are more likely to thrive at work as they can approach tasks with a flexible mindset, regulate their emotions in high-pressure scenarios, and bounce back quickly from setbacks [32]. On the other hand, thriving at work refers to the positive psychological state that accompanies employees in the work environment, which makes them work comfortably without any tension or pressure [33]. By promoting emotional agility and providing resources for managing emotions effectively, organizations can cultivate a culture where employees feel supported and empowered to reach their full potential at work [34]. Individuals who possess emotional agility can effectively navigate their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in response to various situations, enabling them to adapt more readily to change and stress [6]. Additionally, organizations that prioritize emotional agility create a culture of psychological safety where employees feel empowered to express their feelings openly and seek support from their peers [35]. Overall, promoting emotional agility among employees is essential for creating a thriving and productive work environment where individuals can effectively manage challenges and achieve personal and professional goals. Considering the literature, the second hypothesis was designed as follows:

H₃: Emotional agility has positive impact on employees thriving at work.

2.5. Social Intelligence and Employees Thriving at Work

Social intelligence is a crucial skill for employees to thrive in the workplace. This type of intelligence involves the ability to understand and manage interpersonal relationships effectively, navigate social environments, and demonstrate empathy towards others [36]. Employees with strong social intelligence are better equipped to communicate clearly, collaborate with colleagues, resolve conflicts, and build positive relationships with clients and stakeholders [37]. These skills can lead to increased job satisfaction, higher levels of employee engagement, and improved overall performance within an organization [36]. Employers should prioritize promoting social intelligence among their workforce through training programs, team-building activities, and fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration [38]. By developing social intelligence in employees, organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive work environment where individuals can thrive

professionally. On other hand, thriving at work refers to experiencing a high level of engagement, satisfaction, and fulfillment in one's job, it involves being passionate about work, feeling a sense of purpose and accomplishment, and being motivated to learn and develop new skills [39]. Thriving employees are more engaged, productive, and committed to their organization, experience lower levels of stress and burnout, and have higher levels of job satisfaction and overall well-being [40]. Organizations can promote thriving by providing decision-making discretion, broad information sharing, feedback, and a climate of civility [41]. Thriving at work is associated with improved task performance, job satisfaction, physical well-being, and reduced job strain, highlighting its importance for individual and organizational success [42]. In light of the significance of thriving in the workplace, it is vital for organizations to explore the factors that help employees to motivate to thrive at work. Considering the literatures, the fourth hypothesis was designed as follows:

H₄: Social intelligence has positive impact on employees thriving at work

2.6. Openness to Experience and Employees Thriving at work

Openness to experience plays a vital role in employees thriving at work. Research suggests that openness can positively impact work outcomes by fostering a culture of trust, honesty, and open dialogue in the workplace [43]. While some studies indicate that openness to experience may not directly influence thriving, other personality traits like self-efficacy, optimism, and conscientiousness have been found to moderately and positively impact thriving at work [44]. By fostering an environment that values and encourages openness to experience, organizations can create a culture where employees feel empowered to think outside the box, take risks, and push boundaries – ultimately leading to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being at work [45]. Additionally, factors like transformational leadership, supportive climate, and organizational justice significantly contribute to employee thriving by creating an atmosphere of respect and trust [46]. Managers can enhance employee thriving by redesigning work practices, providing autonomy, and cultivating a positive work environment that promotes learning and vitality among employees [47]. Thriving at work involves employees feeling energized, valued, and finding meaning in their work [39]. Research emphasizes the importance of addressing four key needs for employees to thrive in organizations: professional thriving, emotional thriving, relational thriving, and significance thriving [42]. Organizations also play a vital role in creating conditions that support employee thriving, which leads to improved performance, reduced turnover, and a positive work environment [41, 48]. Ultimately, embracing openness and creating a supportive workplace culture are essential for employees to thrive and perform at their best. Considering the literatures, the fifth hypothesis was designed as follows:

H₅: Openness to experience has positive impact on employees thriving at work

2.7. The mediating Role of Openness to Experience

In the professional setting, the importance of openness to experience cannot be overstated. Employees who exhibit this trait are more likely to embrace change, seek out innovative solutions, and adapt quickly to new situations [43]. Research indicates that openness can significantly impact work outcomes, especially in dynamic job contexts that value unconventional thinking and individual contributions [49]. Furthermore, openness to experience transforms company culture, creating an environment where employees feel supported, heard, and valued, ultimately enhancing engagement and productivity [50]. Openness also encourages learning new perspectives, improving relationships, self-development, flexibility, risk-taking, empathy, leadership skills, and fair treatment for all employees [51].

Considering this literature, the sixth and seventh hypotheses were designed as follows:

H₆: Openness to Experience enhances the relationship between EA and ET at work.

H₇: Openness to Experience enhances the relationship between ET at work and EA.

2.8. Conceptual Framework

Research in emotional agility, openness, and social intelligence has shown that employees who possess these qualities are more likely to thrive in their professional environments. Emotional agility refers to the ability to adapt to different situations, regulate one's emotions, and respond effectively to challenges. Openness is characterized by a willingness to consider new ideas, perspectives, and ways of thinking. Social intelligence involves the ability to navigate social interactions with empathy, sensitivity, and understanding. When employees demonstrate these traits, they tend to have stronger relationships with coworkers, better problem-solving skills, and increased job satisfaction. By cultivating emotional agility, openness, and social intelligence within their workforce, organizations can create a more positive and productive work environment where employees are able to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, many theories have been investigated in the realm of employee thriving, including those focused on Emotional Agility, Openness, and Social Intelligence. Emotional Agility refers to one's ability to adapt and respond effectively to various emotional situations, fostering resilience and well-being. Openness is crucial in promoting creativity, innovation, and adaptability in the workplace, leading to greater job satisfaction and performance. Social Intelligence encompasses skills such as empathy, communication, and conflict resolution, which are essential for building strong relationships and collaborative teams. By incorporating these theories into professional development programs and organizational practices, employers can create a positive work environment that supports employee growth, engagement, and overall success. Embracing Emotional Agility, Openness, and Social Intelligence can lead to a more motivated workforce that is better equipped to navigate challenges and thrive in today's rapidly changing business landscape.

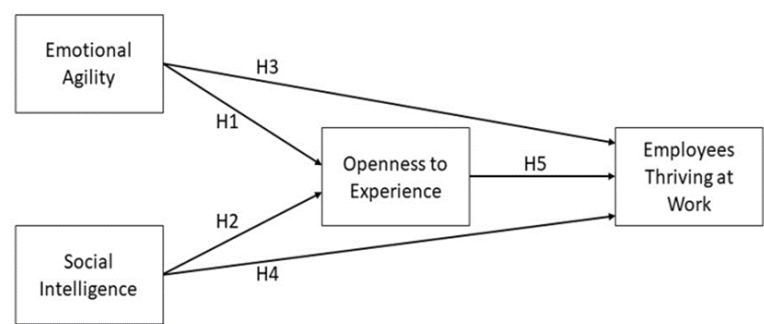


Figure 1. Research Model.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants

The target population of this research was the entrepreneurs in Omani SMEs. Sample included 222 of Omani entrepreneurs in SMEs who accepted to participate and filled the questionnaire. Random sampling was used to collect the data from different industrial areas from SMEs in Oman. The data was collected between August and December 2023. The profiles of respondents who voluntary participated in this research are illustrated in table 1.

Table 1. Description of Sample.

	Demographics	N	%
Gender	Male	151	68 %
	Female	71	32%
	Total	222	100%
Age	18-30	55	25%
	31-45	119	53.4%
	46-60	42	18.9%
	More than 60	6	2.7%
	Total	222	100%
Education Level	Diploma	57	26%
	Bachelor	100	45%
	Graduate level	65	29 %
	Total	222	100%

N: Number of participants; %: The percentage

As illustrated in table 1, most of the participants were male, making up 68% of the sample, while the percentage of females was 32%. The age distribution shows that most entrepreneurs are young people between the ages of 31 and 45 years, at a rate of 53.4%, and with regard to educational level, those holding a bachelor’s degree are the majority, at a rate of 46%.

3.2. Procedures and Measures

The measurement model with the multi-item scales of emotional agility, social intelligence, openness to experience and employee sustainable workplace in SMEs was adopted from prior research and modified to fit the measurements of this research. Academician, researchers and group discussion with some entrepreneurs helped in improving the research tool and items of questionnaires. These questionnaires were translated to Arabic and then return to English again. The original construct of emotional agility with 7 items was adopted from [52]. While the 7 items of social intelligence were adopted from [53]. Furthermore, the questionnaire of openness to experience included 5 items and was adopted from [54, 55]. The 12 items of employee sustainable workplace in SMEs scale also was adopted from [56]. A Five-point Likert scale ranging from “5” strongly agree to “1” strongly disagree was used to operationalize the questionnaires.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data of this research was collected by Questionnaires which designed and distributed by using google drive as an effective tool to collect data. Structural Equation Modeling SPSS 27 was employed to determine the inter-related dependence of relationship among variables. In addition, descriptive statistics including Mean and SD was used to describe emotional agility, social intelligence, openness to experience and employee sustainable workplace in Oman SMEs. Further processing analysis was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of questionnaires, multicollinearity and factor loading where the items were tested one more time to ensure their validity after translation to Arab language.

4. Results

This part, we present the descriptive statistics, correlation, coefficient of determination, and path coefficients analysis of our research.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The initial analysis of SMEs in Omani context includes the determination of entrepreneur’s emotional agility, social intelligence, their openness to experience and also their sustainable workplace. Table 2 illustrates the mean, standard deviation, reliability test CR and AVE in Omani SMEs.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and Reliability.

Items	M	SD	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
EA					
EA1	4.03	0.871	0.875	0.914	0.634
EA2	3.97	0.769			
EA3	3.88	0.905			
EA4	4.04	0.784			
EA5	4.19	0.767			
EA6	3.92	0.818			
EA7	4.13	0.788			
Total	4.02	0.815			
SI					
SI1	4.09	0.779	0.842	0.921	0.637
SI2	4.15	0.796			
SI3	4.06	0.791			
SI4	3.92	0.907			
SI5	4.18	0.783			
SI6	4.08	0.766			
SI7	4.11	0.624			
Total	4.08	0.778			
OTE					
OTE1	4.14	0.807	0.813	0.934	0.634
OTE 2	4.22	0.700			
OTE 3	4.17	0.781			
OTE 4	4.18	0.756			
OTE 5	4.22	0.704			
Total	4.18	0.750			
ETHR					
ETHR1	4.00	0.715	0.912	0.899	0.602
ETHR2	3.91	0.891			
ETHR3	3.86	0.882			
ETHR4	3.99	0.864			
ETHR5	4.05	0.759			
ETHR6	4.23	0.710			
ETHR7	4.09	0.725			
ETHR8	4.11	0.704			
ETHR9	4.09	0.746			
ETHR10	4.00	0.752			
ETHR11	4.05	0.768			
ETHR12	4.15	0.769			
Total	4.05	0.774			

According to descriptive analysis, the mean for four variables was more than 4 out of 5 which shows that emotional agility, social intelligence, openness to experience and thriving at work were highly recognized by Omani entrepreneurs in SMEs. In addition, Cronbach alpha illustrated that

items used to determine these variables were reliable and valid where Cronback alpha for all variables was more than eight.

4.2. Correlation

A further step was to check the correlations among the variables. Table 3 presents the results of the correlation tests. These results were significant, with $p < .000$ for all the variables. In addition, the connection between the variables was positive and high in most cases. Some values were moderated, such as the relationship between emotional agility and employee sustainable workplace (.680) and openness to experience with the same employee thriving at work (.670). Furthermore, it is important to mention that all the results were significant ($p < .000$).

Table 3. Correlation among variables.

		EA	SI	ETHR	OTE
EA	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	222			
SI	Pearson Correlation	.810**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000			
	N	222	222		
ETHR	Pearson Correlation	.680**	.747**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		
	N	222	222	222	
OTE	Pearson Correlation	.775**	.795**	.670**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	222	222	222	222
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

4.3. Coefficient of Determination (R2)

In the context of PLS-SEM, this section explores another critical criterion for evaluating the structural model. As shown in table 4, the R2 value is also known as the coefficient of determination (Hair et al., 2012). According to Hair et al. (2010) and Elliott & Woodward (2007), this figure indicates the percentage of variability in the dependent variable that can be explained by one or more predictor factors. But the appropriate cutoff point for a respectable R2 value varies according to the study setting (Hair et al., 2010). For R2 estimate, Falk and Miller (1992) suggest a minimum sufficient level of 0.10. Moreover, R2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19, according to Chin and colleagues (1998), imply large, moderate, and mild impacts, respectively.

Table 4. Variance Explained in the Endogenous Latent Variables.

	R-square	Effect Size
OTE	0.682	Large
ETHR	0.581	Large

As depicted in Table 4 above, the research model accounts for 68.2% of the overall variance in openness to experience in Omani SMEs and 58.1% of the total variance in employee thriving at work. This suggests that the combined influence of the two sets of exogenous latent variables, namely emotional agility and social intelligence of entrepreneurs collectively explains 68.2% and 58.1% of the variance in openness to experience and sustainable workplace respectively. Therefore, resulting from Falk & Miller (1992) and Chin and others (1998) the criteria, the two endogenous latent variables showed acceptable levels of R² values, which were considered as Large.

4.4. Path coefficients Analysis

In the context of the PLS model, it is essential to present the overall effects before confirming the presence of actual mediation. This step holds significance as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the mediating construct's role and offers insights to practitioners regarding cause-and-effect relationships, as emphasized by Hair et al. (2012).

Table 5. Direct Effects layer one (Coefficients).

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.478	1.883		4.503	0.000
	EA	0.586	0.1	0.381	5.865	0.000
	SI	0.824	0.11	0.486	7.471	0.000
a Dependent Variable: OTE						

According to table 5, the research first and second hypotheses were supported. Hypothesis one (H1) investigates the impact of emotional agility (EA) on openness to experience (OTE). The Beta value was positive (0.381) and P value of 0.000 provide evidence in support of this hypothesis, suggesting a positive impact in Omani SMEs. The second hypothesis (H2) explores the impact of social intelligence (SI) on openness to experience (OTE) indicating that there is a positive impact with (0.486) and P value of 0.000 as well. These results illustrate that our first and second hypotheses were supported highlighting the emotions and intelligence of Omani entrepreneurs in enhancing their experiences.

On the other hand, we conducted second layer regression analysis to examine the impact of emotional agility, social intelligence and openness to experience on employee sustainable workplace in Omani SMEs. Results of regression analysis are illustrated in table 6.

Table 6. Coefficients (Direct Effect for layer two).

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.532	0.966		4.689	0.000
	EA	0.106	0.053	0.161	2.001	0.047
	SI	0.36	0.061	0.497	5.93	0.000
	OTE	0.064	0.033	0.151	1.937	0.054
a Dependent Variable: ETHR						

Third hypothesis (H3) examines impact of EA on ETHR., where the standardized coefficient Beta value was positive indicating positive impact of EA on ETHR while the P value was 0.047 which remains under 0.05. In addition, the fourth hypothesis (H4) investigates the impact of SI on ETHR in SMEs where the Beta value was positive and relatively good (0.497) while the P value was 0.000 showing that hypothesis four is supported. Finally, regarding the role of OTE and its impact on ETHR which is indicated in hypothesis five (H5), the results of regression test indicated that OTE positively impact ETHR with Beta (0.151) but this effect is insignificant where P value was 0.054. These results support four hypotheses (H1-4) while the fifth hypothesis was not supported.

4.5. Moderation Role of OTE

According to Albers (2009), indirect effects encompass the combined influence of both direct and indirect effects between two specific constructs. Moreover, as outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008), the concept of an indirect effect centers on the impact of variable X on variable Y, facilitated by an intervening variable M. Furthermore, to test the sixth and seventh hypotheses, further analysis was conducted using Process v4 written by Hayes (Hayes, 2022). In this part, researchers used both

emotional agility and social intelligence as the dependent variables, employee sustainable workplace as the independent variable, and OTE as the moderator by adopting Model 4 of PROCESS-v4.

To test hypothesis (H6), the full model is illustrated in Table 7. R square was 0.46, which means that emotional agility explains 46% of employee sustainable workplace in Omani SMEs in the presence of CSE.

Table 7. The Model Summary for Emotional Agility.

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
EA	.6785	.4604	4.3641	187.7272	1.0000	220.0000	0.0000

Furthermore, Table 8 explains Regression Model 4. The results of the analysis indicate that openness to experience (OTE) acts as a moderator between Emotional agility and employee sustainable workplace in SMEs. The interaction in Model 4 was $\beta = .911$ ($p < 0.05$). These results confirm the sixth hypothesis (H6). This means that OTE enhances the relationship between emotional agility and employees thriving at work place in SMEs in Oman. In addition, the indirect impact of OTE is 0.2799 of the total impact.

Table 8. Role of OTE as Mediator between EA and ETHR.

Direct effect of X on Y						
	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	0.9113	0.0851	10.7137	0.000	0.7437	1.0789
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
OTE	0.2799	0.0673	0.1538	0.4177		

To test hypothesis (H7), the role of OTE as mediator, social intelligence as the independent variable, and ETHR as the dependent by adopting Model 4 of PROCESS-v4. The results are presented in Tables 9 and 10, respectively. A model summary for OTE as a moderator is presented in Table 9. R square was 0.55, which means that social intelligence explains 55% of employee thriving at work in the presence of OTE.

Table 9. The Model Summary for CSE as Moderator.

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
SI	.7469	.5578	3.5764	277.5378	1.0000	220.0000	0.0000

Furthermore, Table 10 explains Regression Model 4. The results of the analysis indicate that openness to experience (OTE) acts as a moderator between social intelligence and employee sustainable workplace in Omani SMEs. The interaction in Model 4 was $\beta = .01289$ ($p < 0.05$). These results confirm the seventh hypothesis (H7). This means that OTE enhances the relationship between social intelligence and thriving of employees at workplace in SMEs in Oman. Furthermore, the indirect impact was determined as 0.2190 of the total impact as illustrated in table 10.

Table 10. Role of OTE as Mediator between SI and ETHR.

Direct effect of X on Y						
	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	0.1289	.1026	11.0005	.0000	.9266	1.3311
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:						
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
OTE	.2190	.0875	.0598	.4066		

5. Discussion

Based on the results of this research, some of personal characteristics of Arab entrepreneurs have been investigated including emotional agility, social intelligence and openness to experiences. These elements were selected specifically regarding their importance in Arab context where entrepreneurs should have these skills in order to achieve their SMEs objectives. Furthermore, Oman Vision 2040 emphasized the role of Omani youth in development of economy where many initiatives have been conducted during last few years inducing young people to engage more in the national projects and participate in achieving vision.

The first part of analysis investigated the role of emotional agility and social intelligence on openness to experience for Omani entrepreneurs in SMEs where the results revealed that both emotional agility and social intelligence have positive impact on openness to experience. These results confirm that when entrepreneur possess emotional agility and social intelligence, they are more open to have new experience and these characteristics could be reflected on SMEs. These results are in line with prior studies including [57] agility in organization is correlated to social intelligence. Another study [58] indicated that human resource agility has positive and significant impact on crisis management. More prior studies were conducted related to workforce agility [7, 59], social agility [60], Intellectual agility [61] and emotional intelligence in SMEs.

Second part of the analysis was related to the impact of emotional agility, social intelligence and openness to experience on employee thriving at work in Omani SMEs. These entrepreneurs' characteristics were tested once again and results confirm positive impact on sustainable workplace where such competencies increasing entrepreneurs thriving especially in SMEs. These results were tested in prior works but in different fields including employee engagement [36], workplace culture [62, 63], sustainable employability [64], and management commitment [65]. These results ensure that entrepreneur's emotional agility and social intelligence play significant role in employee sustainable workplace.

Furthermore, the mediating role of openness to experience was tested as part of our analysis where results revealed that openness to experience enhances the relationship among both emotional agility and social intelligence with employee sustainable workplace in Omani SMEs. There is no prior works adopted openness to experience as mediator between these variables which gives our work more value especially, we conducted this study in Omani context. This also provides evidence of SMEs and entrepreneurs' characteristics from different perspective where these emotional and social factors enhance the existence and worthiness of SMEs and improve the national level economy.

6. Conclusions

This research aimed to investigate Omani entrepreneurs' factors including emotional agility, social intelligence, openness to experience and employee sustainable workplace in SMEs. Results revealed that emotional agility and social intelligence have positive and significant impact on entrepreneurs' openness to experience. The results also revealed that emotional agility, social intelligence have positive direct impact on employee sustainable workplace in Omani SMEs. Furthermore, openness to experience has positive impact on employee thriving at work whereas this impact is insignificant. The results also investigated the indirect role of both emotional agility and social intelligence on employee sustainable workplace through openness to experience where both variables have positive indirect impact on employee thriving. These results confirm the effective role of openness to experience among Omani entrepreneurs where they should adopt new strategies and techniques to improve their skills and support their SMEs. This research highlighted the role of interpersonal skills including agility and intelligence of entrepreneurs in Arab context.

7. Implications

The Omani government is actively supporting the growth and sustainability of small and medium enterprises as part of an economic diversification strategy aimed at reducing the country's dependence on oil exports. The SME sector plays a crucial role in the Omani economy, employing

40% of the workforce and contributing 15-20% to the GDP. To foster the growth of SMEs, the government has implemented various initiatives, including the establishment of a specialized body dedicated to developing small and medium enterprises, providing access to soft loans, and offering training and guidance to entrepreneurs.

Despite these efforts, the failure rate among SMEs remains high, with 41.1% of them experiencing zero or negative growth. Additionally, 78.7% of SME owners acknowledge that rules and regulations have a significant impact on their sustainability. It is evident that more support and resources are needed to address the challenges faced by SMEs in Oman and to ensure their long-term success and contribution to the economy.

Furthermore, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Oman encounter a multitude of challenges, such as fierce competition, limited access to financial services, a scarcity of skilled workforce, and navigating relationships with suppliers. According to the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business report, Oman was ranked 78th globally in terms of ease of doing business, with notably low scores in access to credit (134th) and protection of minority investors (125th). These obstacles have been further compounded by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted supply chains, decreased customer demand, and imposed financial constraints on SMEs. While the Omani government has implemented measures to alleviate the economic repercussions of the pandemic on SMEs, it is evident that these businesses require tailored solutions to address their unique challenges.

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Informed Consent Statement: The respondents of questionnaires were confirmed that participation in questionnaire is voluntary and they have the right to not participate. However, there is no names or important information that reveal personal life of participants were asked. The participants were Omani entrepreneurs from Omani SMEs around the country.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this research is available from the corresponding author with a reasonable request.

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