

# Critical Elements of Emotional Quotients (EQ) During and After Crisis among Malay Women Food Operators in Klang Valley

Nazatul Shima Abdul Rani\*, K. Sarojini Krishnan and Zurinah Suradi

**Abstract---** This paper highlighted the elements of emotional quotients among female or women food operators in Klang Valley, Malaysia during, and after the economic crisis. Emotional quotients are divided into five elements which are self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. About 100 questionnaires were distributed around Kampung Baru, Sentul, Keramat, Wangsa Maju, and Ulu Kelang in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The data were collected on October 2017. Most women food operators agreed that during the economic crisis the most important elements of emotional quotients are social skills, self-regulation, self-motivation, self-awareness, and empathy. However, after economic crisis most women entrepreneurs agreed that the most important elements are self-motivation, self-awareness, social skills, self-regulation, and empathy. Hence, from the study, we can conclude that in order to survive during economic crisis, women entrepreneur should be focusing more on their social skills which are getting cooperation from employees, having special unit to communicate with employees, ability to communicate with employees, ability to inspire employees, and ability to evaluating abilities employees. However, after economic crisis they will be focusing more on being self-motivated that includes ability to control operation costs, to keep employee interest, to stay positive, to ensure business operation run smoothly, and to keep positive culture in the business.

**Keywords---** Emotional Quotients (EQ), Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Self-motivation, Empathy, Social Skills, Women Entrepreneur.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

On SMEs by sectors analysis for the period of 2005 – 2016, it showed that SMEs are important to the Malaysian economic activities because it contributed to 99.2% of total business establishments, and 32% of Gross Domestic Product (Tahir, Razak, & Rentah, 2018). In 2016 alone, 98.5 % of establishments are SMEs, and about 20.6% of SMEs are women owned. In Malaysia, women entrepreneur or women-owned company is defined as those women who is owning more than 51% equity held, OR either a managing director or chief operating officer is a woman with at least 10% equity or shares of a company (Economic Census 2016, Profiles of SMEs, SMECorp Website, 2018). As can be seen the number of women owned SMEs still lower than males in Malaysia, even in Europe the female top managers or female board members are still small in number as compared to male (De Beaufort, & Summers, 2014).

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Nazatul Shima Abdul Rani\*, Universiti Kuala Lumpur, UniKL Business School, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. E-mail: shima.rani@unikl.edu.my  
K. Sarojini Krishnan, Universiti Kuala Lumpur, UniKL Business School, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.  
Zurinah Suradi, College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman.

Most women have ventured into business as a way to gain empowerment in fulfilling their entrepreneurial motives (financial, recognition, freedom, family, marketing, opportunity, economic condition, and governance), and as a way to liberate from a glass ceiling experienced by most female professionals (Abugeetha, 2018; Sharif, 2015).

According to Hussain, Awan, & Bajwa, (2016), every entrepreneur will somehow face crises in their business so as managers, and those who claims not experiencing any conflicts at their workplace are considered as socially blind. Normally, conflicts might happened due to one or more people affected negatively by another person or group. In addition, one of the most important elements of success for an entrepreneur is the ability to improve his/her social effectiveness (Khatoon, 2013). Hence, EQ is essential for all entrepreneurs to master. Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotients(EQ) is rooted from social intelligence studies that is a mixture of interpersonal and also intrapersonal intelligence (FakhrEldin, 2017). In short, a person with high EQ normally will have the ability to interact with others well, and also have the ability in understanding others emotions that allow them to react to it when necessary (Naseer, Chishti, Rahman, & Jumani, 2011).

Hence, the main purpose of this study is to identify the most critical elements of emotional quotients (EQ) that are important during and after economic crisis as experienced by female SMEs that are involved in food service sector around Klang Valley, Malaysia.

### ***1.1 Research Question***

What is the most important elements of EQ among female food operators (SMEs) in Klang Valley?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This session forwarded the dimensions for emotional quotients, and also women entrepreneur and economic cycles.

### ***2.1 Emotional Quotients***

An earlier study on intelligence was done by Thorndike in year 1920, he had examined the intelligence in three dimensions which are social intelligence, abstract intelligence and mechanical intelligence. The Social intelligence is an intelligence that is associated with human ability to adapt in their social life such as ability to understand and managing people. In terms of the abstract intelligence it is referring to the intelligence associated with the concepts and principles that can be used in solving problems. The mechanical intelligence is an intelligence related to tools and objects (Altındağ, & Köseadağı, 2015).

Hence, social intelligence is similar to emotional quotients due to its nature related to the ability to understand and managing people.

Emotional Quotient (EQ) is referring the ability of a person to understand his/her emotion with the other people emotions and can be developed (Surbhi, 2016; Subramanian, 2016). Thus, studying of EQ is the study of one's emotion dealing with situations of oneself, life, work and others. Emotional quotients comprises of five major elements which are self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills (Piperopoulos, 2010) (Refer Table 1).

Self-awareness can be summarized as the abilities to understand own emotions, internal issues and abilities to make own assessment and judgment. Self-management or self-regulation is referring to the abilities to manage own emotions, while regulating own impulses. Self-motivation is concerning on reaching goals such as ability to enjoy challenges and passionate on work. Empathy or social awareness is the ability to be aware of others emotions and react to it whenever possible. Relationship management or social skills is referring to the ability to communicate with others with the intention to influence or inspire in getting favorable response from them (FakhrEldin, 2017; Mortan, Ripoll, Carvalho, & Bernal, 2014; Piperopoulos, 2010).

According to Surbhi (2016), the difference between IQ and EQ is that IQ is inborn and enable a person to perform well in school or academic, whereas an EQ can be learned and improved, and enable a person to be successful in life. Thus, it is undeniable for a person to be successful in school and life requires the mastery of IQ and EQ. As such, an entrepreneur should be high in EQ as the nature of the business requires them to deal with people on daily basis including employees, customers, suppliers and etc.

EQ also has shown to affect the job performance such as salary level, salary increment, and position in the company that will nurture a positive relationships at work, ability to work effectively in teams, and also ability in building social capital in the company (Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, and Salovey, 2006). In addition, EQ is also have positive association with job efficiency and operational success (Shuklaa, & Bhandari, 2014; Pungboonpanich, 2012). Other than that, earlier studies conducted in other countries shows that the emotional quotients across gender do not show any significant differences among entrepreneurs (FakhrEldin, 2017; Mortan, Ripoll, Carvalho, & Bernal, 2014). In fact, emotional quotients or EQ is also highly linked to leadership and performance (Hussain, Awan, & Bajwa, 2016; Altındağ, & Köseadağı, 2015; Mortan, Ripoll, Carvalho, & Bernal, 2014; Wright, 2014; Kim, Yoo, Lee, & Kim, 2012), hence for this study, the emotional quotients is used to measure women entrepreneur in handling economic crises in managing their business.

Table 1: Emotional Quotients Definition

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	Understanding of one's emotions and drives that includes issues on control, personal assessment, burnout/workaholic, and personal values or self-worth.
<b>Self-Regulation</b>	Adaptability to changes and control such as patience, multi-tasking, time management, and objectives.
<b>Self-Motivation</b>	Ability to enjoy challenges, and be passionate on work
<b>Empathy</b>	Social awareness skills
<b>Social Skills</b>	Supportive communication skills – ability to influence and inspire

Source: Piperopoulos, P. (2010). Tacit knowledge and emotional intelligence: the 'intangible' values of SMEs'. *Strategic Change*, 19, 125-139.

## 2.2 Women Entrepreneur and Economic Cycle

There are four stages of economic cycle which are early recession, full recession, early recovery, and late recovery. Most studies on economic crisis focuses on financial planning, and policy, however, not much study focusing on the experience of women entrepreneur during and after economic crisis (Keller, 2018).

In a study conducted by Sultanova, and Chechina (2016), they found out that human capital is the main catalyst to sustain business performance during economic crisis.

Since women being known as being too emotional or irrational in their decision making. Nevertheless, women are also known to be paying attention to details. Further more, women also were highlighted to have a sustainable advantage over man due to the following skills: 1) being opportunity experts of situations, 2) ability to forge professional network, 3) ability to cultivate relationships among people, and 4) born as natural givers (Llopis, 2011; Ahmad, Bangash, & Ahmad Khan, 2009).

In an earlier study on small service businesses in Spain, it showed that there is a difference between men and women entrepreneur in crisis readiness and confronting the crisis in their business. Both gender were successful in confronting crisis however differ in their approach. Most women entrepreneur are keeping social measures in place, focusing on pricing and less drastic in reducing cost (avoid dismissal or layoff)(Alonso Almeida, & Bremser, 2014). Similarly, in a study conducted in Italy, the finding showed that women entrepreneur are more defensive in confronting economic crisis by focusing on reducing activities and increasing efficiency of their business operation (Cesaroni, Sentuti, & Buratti, 2015). Hence, it is about time to explore the elements of Emotional Quotients of women entrepreneur during and after crisis in Malaysia to further understand their behavior in confronting economic crises.

### **III. METHODOLOGY / MATERIALS**

#### ***3.1 Data Collection***

Since in Malaysia the service sectors is the largest s for sector for SMEs, hence women entrepreneurs that owns food service businesses such as food operator, restaurant, café, and caterer were chosen as respondent for this study. About 100 questionnaires distributed to women food operators located around Setapak, Wangsa Maju, Sentul, Keramat, and Kampung Baru, where those areas also known as Klang Valley. The duration of the data collection is one month that was conducted on the month of October, 2017.

#### ***3.2 Questionnaire Development***

There are two parts in the questionnaires, the first part is on the respondent profiles and business information, and the second part is on the dimension of the emotional quotients. The first part on the questionnaires on respondent's profiles and business information. The respondent profiles includes age, education background, and also any financial support or loan they had applied before. Whereas, business information includes number of years the business has been in operation, type of business ownership, and number of employees. On the second part of the questionnaires the five major elements of emotional quotients outline (FakhrEldin, 2017; Mortan, Ripoll, Carvalho, & Bernal, 2014; Piperopoulos, 2010). Self-awareness with five (5) items, self-regulation with five (5) items, self-motivation with five (5) items, empathy with five (5) items, and social skills with seven (7) items. For Part B, each item is measured using 5-point Likert scale, in which 5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree. The respondents need to give their responses on the items for each dimension during and after economic crisis.

### 3.3 Respondent Profiles

About 100 questionnaires were distributed to women restaurant owner in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Out of 100 respondent, about 34% of them at the age of 31 to 40 years old, 33% at the age of 41 to 50 years old, 22% at the age of more than 50 years old, 11% at the age of 20 to 30 years old, and none below 20 years old. About 60% with high school education, 25% with Diploma, 7% with a Bachelor degree, and 8% had other qualifications. Out of 100 women entrepreneurs, about 86% had taken loans to finance their business, and about 14% have not taken any financial loans.

### 3.4 Business Information

Most of the business has been in operations for more than 5 years which are about 85%. In terms of business information, out of 100 restaurant about 40% of the business have been in operation between 11 to 15 years, 22% from 6 to 10 years, 17% from 16 to 20 years, 15% from 1 to 5 years, and only 6% have been in operation for more than 20 years. About 85% operated as sole proprietorship, and 15% as partnership. About 75% of the restaurants have around 6 to 10 employees, 20% more than 10 employees, and 5% from 1 to 5 employees.

## IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section forwarded the descriptive analysis and findings on EQ elements during and after economic crisis.

### 4.1 Self Awareness

During economic crisis most of the operators agreed that they have self and tasks control (mean = 4.21), confident with the ability to manage the business venture (mean = 4.14), they need to work hard (mean = 4.11), and also have pride in the business (mean = 4.09). However, after economic crisis they agreed that they need to be more hard working (mean = 4.18), be confident with their decision (mean = 4.10), have self and tasks control (mean = 4.08), and also have pride in the business (mean = 4.04).

From the analysis most women entrepreneur agreed that they are in control, able to manage their business during crisis, will work hard, and have pride in the business, which quite similar after economic crisis. The main difference is that during economic crisis they are not really confident with their decision, however after the economic crisis they are not confident with their abilities in facing economic growth that might be due to increase in demand from customers. Hence, self-awareness is critical to allow the women entrepreneur to understand their capabilities, which allow them to be more cautious in managing their business (Caldwell, & Hayes, 2016).

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis on Self-Awareness

SELF – AWARENESS ITEMS	DURING ECONOMIC CRISIS		AFTER ECONOMIC CRISIS		
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Confident with the decision made for the business.	1003.99		0.835	<b>4.10</b>	0.611
Confident with self-control and tasks control in the business.	<b>1004.21</b>		0.715	<b>4.08</b>	0.774
Confident with ability in managing the business.	<b>1004.14</b>		0.804	3.92	0.849
Confident to work hard in the business.	<b>1004.11</b>		0.723	<b>4.18</b>	0.657
Confident with pride in the business.	<b>1004.09</b>		0.698	<b>4.04</b>	0.931
<b>Overall</b>		<b>4.108</b>		<b>4.064</b>	

#### 4.2 Self-Regulation

Most women entrepreneur agreed that during economic crisis they need to be objective (mean = 4.42), fair (mean = 4.27), ethical (mean = 4.18), multitasking (mean =4.18), and patient in managing their business (mean =4.16). Whereas, after economic crisis they have to be patient (mean = 4.25), fair (mean = 4.18), and objective (mean = 4.08) in managing their business.

As for self-regulation, most women entrepreneur agreed that they are ethical, patient, fair, multi-tasking, and objective in managing their business. After economic crisis most women entrepreneur agreed that they are still patient, fair, and objective in the business, however, after economic crises they agreed that they might be less ethical, and less multi-tasking, this might be due to sudden increase in demand. In fact, this finding is supported by earlier research that self-control is one of the critical aspect of self-regulation that may restrain them from being unreasonable in their business operation during economic crisis (Baron, Mueller, & Wolfe, 2016;Gielnik, Spitzmuller, Schmitt, Klemann, & Frese, 2015).

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis on Self-regulation

SELF – REGULATION ITEMS	DURING ECONOMIC CRISIS		AFTER ECONOMIC CRISIS	
	N	Mean Std. Dev.	Mean Std. Dev.	
Ethical in managing business.	100	4.18 0.730	3.63	0.928
Patient in facing challenges in business.	100	4.16 0.721	4.25	0.642
Fair in managing business.	100	4.27 0.737	4.18	0.716
Multitasking and good in managing time for business.	100	4.18 0.702	3.84	0.884
Objective in managing business.	100	4.42 0.638	4.08	0.734
<b>Overall</b>		<b>4.242</b>	<b>3.996</b>	

#### 4.3 Self-Motivation

In terms of self-motivation, most women entrepreneur agreed that during crisis they always control operation costs (mean = 4.27), ensure the business operation run smoothly (mean = 4.22), keep employee interest (mean = 4.14), keep positive culture (mean = 4.10), and be positive in managing business challenges (mean = 4.09). However, after economic crisis they control operation costs (mean = 4.21), keep employee interest (mean = 4.15), positive (mean = 4.08), ensure business operation run smoothly (mean = 4.04), and keep positive culture in the business (mean = 4.03).

As for self-motivation, all women entrepreneur agreed that they are highly motivated. Similarly, Rey-Martí, Porcar, and Mas-Tur (2015), also have found that women entrepreneur business survival highly dependent on their motivation to face challenges in their business, than those who are striving for work-life balance seems to be less likely to survive in their business. Other than that, money is also found to be one of the main factor in self-motivation because the need to control cost is crucial either during or after economic crises which quite similar with previous study findings (Belás, Bilan, Demjan, & Sipko, 2015).

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis on Self-Motivation

<b>SELF – MOTIVATION</b>	<b>DURING ECONOMIC CRISIS</b>		<b>AFTER ECONOMIC CRISIS</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b>ITEMS</b>					
Positive in facing challenges in business.	100	4.09	0.712	4.08	0.598
Ensure business operation run smoothly.	100	4.22	0.645	4.04	0.764
Endure all challenges to keep positive culture in the business.	100	4.10	0.785	4.03	0.717
Control operation cost in enduring challenges in business.	100	4.27	0.679	4.21	0.624
Keep employees interest in whatever circumstances.	100	4.14	0.667	4.15	0.757
<b>Overall</b>		<b>4.164</b>		<b>4.102</b>	

#### 4.4 Empathy

Most women entrepreneur agreed that they must understand problem faced by employees (mean = 4.19), ensure family matters among employee should be given utmost priority (mean = 4.12), cautious on ethical business issues (mean = 4.11), and empathize with those who are involved in the business (mean = 4.02). However, after economic crisis they agreed that they must ensure employee family matters are given priority (mean = 4.03), empathize with those who are involved in the business (mean = 4.02), and understand the problem faced by employees (mean = 4.01).

As for empathy, most women entrepreneur agreed that during economic crisis they understand problem faced by employees, more cautious on ethical issues, ensure employee’s family matters will be given utmost priority, and empathize other businesses, however, after economic crisis, they are less cautious on ethical business issues, this might be probably due to increasing profit earned after economic crisis. As supported by previous study, entrepreneurs are required to be empathy in order to survive during crisis either economic or political crisis faced by the country (Bhattarai, 2016; Sultanova, & Chechina, 2016; Tindle, 2014).

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis on Empathy

<b>EMPATHY</b>	<b>DURING ECONOMIC CRISIS</b>		<b>AFTER ECONOMIC CRISIS</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b>ITEMS</b>					
Cautious on ethical business issues.	100	4.11	0.634	3.92	0.748
Empathize on those who are involved in the business.	100	4.02	0.724	4.02	0.724
Ensure family matters are given priority.	100	4.12	0.729	4.03	0.611
Understand the problem faced by employees.	100	4.19	0.787	4.01	0.674
Initiative to help employees ease their burden.	100	3.94	0.776	3.98	0.752
<b>Overall</b>		<b>4.076</b>		<b>3.992</b>	

#### 4.5 Social Skills

Most women entrepreneur agreed that they use negotiation techniques to get cooperation from employees and customers (mean = 4.22), setting up special unit to handle communication issues (mean = 4.20), evaluating their own abilities to communicate with employees and customers (mean = 4.19), a special unit to inspire employees and customers (mean = 4.14), and evaluating ability to inspire employees and customers (mean = 4.00).

Whereas, after economic crisis they agreed that they need to give full attention when communicating with employees and customers (mean = 4.12), keep on evaluating communication abilities (mean = 4.10), keep on evaluating abilities to inspire (mean = 4.07), and give full attention when inspiring employees and customers (mean = 4.04).

The findings showed that during economic crisis, most women entrepreneur agreed that they need to establish good relationship with employees, and customers which is supported by previous study that employee might lose their motivation and commitment hence it is pertinent for the women entrepreneur to maintain good rapport with their employees (Sultanova, andChechina, 2016; Markovits, Boer, & van Dick, 2014). However after economic crisis they put less effort on getting cooperation from employees, less effort on communicating with employees and customers, and less effort on inspiring employees and customers. This finding is similar with previous study conducted on stakeholder commitment to help firms they trusted during financial crisis (Lins, Servaes, & Tamayo, 2017), and also employees commitment during crisis (Lin, Chen, Ashford, Lee, & Qian, 2018; Sultanova, & Chechina, 2016; Markovits, Boer, & van Dick, 2014).

Table 6: Descriptive Analysis on Social Skills

SOCIAL SKILLS ITEMS	DURING ECONOMIC CRISIS		AFTER ECONOMIC CRISIS	
	N	Mean Std. Dev.	Mean Std. Dev.	Std. Dev.
Negotiation techniques.	100	4.22 0.675	3.94	0.708
Give attention when communicating.	100	3.96 0.803	<b>4.12</b>	0.686
Give attention when giving inspiration.	100	3.98 0.7091	<b>4.04</b>	0.737
Evaluate abilities to communicate.	100	4.19 0.526	<b>4.10</b>	0.674
Evaluate abilities to inspire.	100	4.00 0.816	<b>4.07</b>	0.769
Special unit to manage communication.	100	4.20 0.739	3.86	0.876
Special unit to inspire.	100	4.14 0.667	3.97	0.771
<b>Overall</b>		<b>4.098</b>	4.014	

#### 4.6 Summary of the Findings on Emotional Quotients

As shown on Figure 1, during economic crisis the most important dimension is self-regulation, followed by self-motivation, self-awareness, social skills, and empathy. In earlier study, it showed that self-regulation highly associated with performance (Wright, 2014). Whereas, after economic crisis it showed that most women entrepreneur agreed that the most important dimension is self-motivation, followed by self-awareness, social skills, self-regulation, and finally empathy. Interestingly, for EQ the least important aspect for women entrepreneur to consider during and after crisis is empathy, however, social skills becoming important after economic crisis than during economic crisis. In contrast with previous researchers that highlighted female normally score higher in empathy than male (Tindle, 2014).



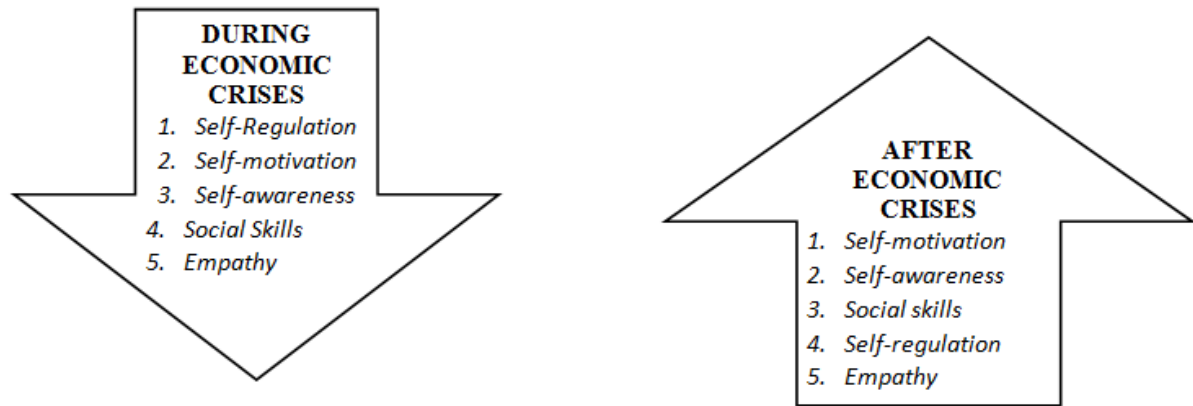


Figure 1: Important Dimensionon EQ During and After Economic Crises

## V. LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The limitation of this study is due to its exploratory in nature, whereby the researcher only focuses on the women entrepreneur who are food operators around Kuala Lumpur or Klang Valley in Malaysia. So, the findings could not be generalized for the whole Malaysia for women entrepreneur. For future research, more sector should be included to make better generalization of women entrepreneur EQ in confronting economic crises, and also after economic crisis. Other than that, it is suggested for government agencies related to entrepreneurship initiatives should focus more on nurturing emotional quotients to new entrepreneurs via workshops, seminars and training to enhance women entrepreneur skills in confronting economic crises.

## VI. CONCLUSION

From this study, the most important dimensions for emotional quotients changes according to the economic crises faced by the women entrepreneur. As can be seen most of them agreed that during economic crises they will be more self-regulated, self-motivated, self-awareness, while maintaining their social skills and empathy. Whereas, after economic crises the demand might increase substantially might urged them to be more self-motivated, self-awareness, and social skills while maintaining to be self-regulated and empathy. As such, women entrepreneur agreed that they need to be more firm or male oriented and less empathy in managing their business during and after economic crises which is quite similar with findings from previous research on female board members (De Beaufort, & Summers, 2014). Thus, emotional quotients including the five dimensions of EQ are obviously crucial for women entrepreneur to master in order to ensure success and business survival. It is evident from Malaysia context and also from past studies on EQ and business performance ((Hussain, Awan, & Bajwa, 2016; Altındağ, & Köseadağı, 2015; Mortan, Ripoll, Carvalho, & Bernal, 2014; Wright, 2014; Kim, Yoo, Lee, & Kim, 2012).

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