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From Emotional Awareness to Digital Resilience: Understanding the Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Social Media-Induced Stress Among Generation Z

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Abstract
Social media is now a core component of how Generation Z communicates, learns, builds a professional identity and seeks entrepreneurial opportunities. Despite this constant connectivity, social comparison, cyberbullying, information overload, public evaluation, and pressure to be seen, there can be significant emotional strain. This article explored the emotional intelligence's influence on stress reactions to social media and its role in digital resilience for Generation Z. A complete integrative approach combined evidence from empirical, theoretical and institutional literature from the period 2018-2025. Emotional awareness, emotional regulation, adaptive coping, digital resilience, entrepreneurial well-being, and sustainable digital participation were the analysis concepts. Results showed that EI was beneficial for youth in identifying emotional triggers, in controlling impulsive reactions, in understanding online interactions and in engaging in healthier coping. The adaptive pathway between emotional awareness and regulation and recovery from negative online experiences was found to be digital resilience. Use patterns were linked to different outcomes, depending on the intensity of use, the features of the platform, social support, culture, digital literacy, and vulnerability. Emotionally savvy Generation Z users might be more equipped to deal with the many reputational challenges they are likely to face in an Asian digital economy, along with algorithmic uncertainty, customer interaction, and constant digital visibility. These skills can maintain creativity, psychological well-being, productive involvement, and entrepreneurial involvement over time. The development of emotional intelligence, digital-resilience skills, responsible platform design, and accessible mental-health support should be combined in universities, entrepreneurship programmes, workplaces, platforms and policy makers. The article adds an integrated pathway from emotional awareness to adaptive coping to digital resilience to sustainable digital entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Iemotional intelligence, digital resilience, social media-induced stress, Generation Z, sustainable digital entrepreneurship, Asian emerging economies

Introduction

Social media is ingrained in the lives of the Gen Z generation and has influenced communication, learning, career and entrepreneurship. People use platforms primarily for interaction, but also network, build their personal brands, engage in online business, and develop their careers. This growth has made digital participation more valuable and heightened emotional needs. Almost 280,000 young people from 44 countries and regions participated in the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study, revealing that the proportion of those who use social media in a problematic way has increased from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022. Among girls, the rate was 13% and among boys, it was 9%; and 36% had regular online engagement with friends (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2024).

Constant connectivity can lead to social comparison, public evaluation, overloading with information, fear of missing out, hostile interactions, and pressure to be "on". These situations can still create stress despite the opportunity and connection that social media can offer. According to the United States Surgeon General, up to 95% of teens between the ages of 13 and 17 were using social media and over 1 in 3 teens were using social media almost every day. Teenagers who use social media for over three hours a day were twice as likely to have adverse mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety symptoms (Office of the Surgeon General, 2023). The numbers do not indicate that all users are impacted by these adverse experiences, but they make emotional coping skills more visible as a crucial aspect of healthy digital participation.

Digital experiences do not necessarily reflect or relate to mental health in a single or simple way, and use of the Internet does not just correspond to time spent on the Internet. Results can be different depending on individual vulnerability, offline context, platform design, the nature of the activity, and the interpretation of online experiences. There has been a tendency for average associations to be small and for the impacts to be very variable among young people, making generalizations about universal harm hard to justify (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Someone who uses social media for supportive communication might get a different result than someone who is faced with a recurring rejection, comparison, or pressure to their reputation. The focus needs to shift from exposure to psychological processes that drive reactions to digital stressors.

The differences can be explained using the term emotional intelligence. It involves identifying emotion, its origin, managing emotional response, and utilizing emotional information adaptively. These skills can assist Generation Z in recognizing and navigating feelings of envy, anxiety, anger or insecurity that may escalate to impulsive posting, compulsive checking, withdrawal or conflict in social media contexts. However, there are links between the use of smartphones and platforms and disruption of sleep, less face-to-face interaction, cyberbullying, negative comparison and interference with academic functioning, and causal pathways are complex (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020). Emotional awareness can then be used to initiate conscious coping instead of unconscious responding.

Social media participation has been linked to psychological distress, depression and anxiety, in terms of time spent, usage patterns, emotional engagement and problematic use. Most of the evidence has been based on a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to draw strong causal inferences (Keles et al., 2020). This restriction is consistent with the need for a structure that clarifies how encounters are perceived as stressors and how users react to them. Digital resilience is about being able to predict the potential dangers, respond appropriately to negative experiences, change behaviour, get support, and persist in the digital world without being led off course permanently.

This pathway is directly related to sustainable education, employment, digital work and entrepreneurship. Social media platforms are increasingly becoming a place for Generation Z to gain visibility, communicate with customers, build their personal brand, share ideas, and engage with digitally-enabled markets. The definition of sustainable entrepreneurial well-being adopted here refers to the ability to maintain psychological well-being, creativity, ethical use of digital means, productive behavior, and entrepreneurial involvement in the long-term. Mental health and social media use correlations have been found to be inconsistent and weak across different populations; however, the relationship between social media and mental health is different among users, social media platforms, activities, and context (Valkenburg et al., 2022). Lesser focus has been paid to the role of emotional intelligence in shaping resilient entrepreneurial behavior from stressful online experiences of young users, especially in the context of the Asian digital economy. The article thus explored the stress factors associated with the social media use, the importance of emotional intelligence in adaptive coping, and devised an integrated model that links emotional awareness, digital resilience, and sustainable entrepreneurial well-being.

2. Methodology

A comprehensive integrative review design was used to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence, stress induced by the use of social networks and digital resilience of the generation Z, and was not based on a strict birth year but on the adolescent, university student, emerging adult and young adult populations in the selected literature. By using this method, empirical, theoretical and review-based evidence from psychology,

education, communication, digital wellness, entrepreneurship and behavioural research were included. Literature on youth entrepreneurship, digital work, sustainable well-being and resilience in technology-intensive environments was also taken into account in the review.

Identification of relevant studies was carried out using search facilities found in Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, PubMed, ScienceDirect and Google Scholar. Literature was searched from 2018-2025. The keywords used were "emotional intelligence," "emotional awareness," "emotion regulation," "social media stress," "digital stress," "technostress," "social media fatigue," "digital resilience," "Generation Z," "young adults," "digital entrepreneurship," "youth entrepreneurship," "student entrepreneurs," "content creators," "platform work," "Asian digital economies," "venture persistence" and "sustainable well-being." The main concepts were joined with boolean operators to narrow down the search results.

Studies were considered for inclusion when they were published in English, discussed at least two of the core concepts, and were conducted with adolescents, university students, young adults, or Generation Z and included relevant theoretical or empirical evidence. Only peer-reviewed research articles, systematic literature reviews, conceptual studies and reports from well-known public or international organisations were included. Records, opinion pieces, non-scholarly (including studies unrelated to social media), and publications where there was no clear relevance to emotional functioning or digital stress were excluded.

The titles and abstracts were first reviewed for relevance and then full texts of articles that met the inclusion criteria were evaluated. Data about authors, publication year, country, population, research design, variables, theoretical basis and key conclusions were collected and put together in a structured review matrix. Further coding concerned whether each of the sources covered entrepreneurial activity, digital work, well-being of a business, well-being of a person, Asian contexts, institutional support, or technology-enabled participation in business. Thematic synthesis was used to compare the selected evidence. The findings were summarised in the following groups: emotional awareness, emotional regulation, stressors in social media, adaptive coping, digital resilience and sustainable digital participation. Prior to the evidence being included in the overall synthesis, methodological quality, conceptual clarity, source credibility, population relevance, and consistency of findings were assessed.

3. Conceptual Foundations

3.1 Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Awareness

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to recognize, understand, regulate and leverage emotions to enhance judgment, relationships and coping. It is viewed as a set of cognitive-emotional abilities in ability-based models, and as a personality trait filled with emotional tendencies in trait-based models. These differences are important because other measures of emotional functioning may capture different aspects of emotional functioning (O'Connor et al., 2019). Emotional awareness is the first step in digital coping, by identifying feelings of anxiety, envy, anger or insecurity during a digital experience. Emotional competence could also help adolescents and young adults to make rational decisions about their use of platforms, communication and self-control (Kreuder et al., 2024).

3.2 Social Media-Induced Stress

Social media stress occurs when a user is able to meet his or her emotional and coping needs in relation to the demands of social media. This can be caused by constant notifications, comparison to others, public scrutiny, cyber-bullying, information overload or a pressured perfectionist image. Digital stress is an umbrella term that describes the general reaction to the demands of digital technology, whereas technostress refers to the specific stress response to the complexity, intrusion and overload of technology. Social media fatigue is characterized by tiredness and loss of motivation, while problematic use is characterized by the inability to control use and persistence in using even when it is harmful. Emotional intelligence could have a beneficial effect on reducing acute stress through better emotional recognition, interpretation, regulation (Lea et al., 2019), but the findings depend on the emotional intelligence measure and the context. This can have an impact on mood and behaviour and participation (UK Council for Internet Safety, 2019).

3.3 Digital Resilience

Digital resilience is the ability to predict online risks, control negative experiences, bounce back from failures, and learn and adjust future online behaviour without giving up on positive online involvement. It is built over time as a result of multiple experiences with personal strengths, supportive relationships, digital knowledge and available institutional resources. Resilience is a dynamic process that varies across developmental periods and in response to different environments (Masten & Barnes, 2018). In the context of education and social media, digital resilience is defined as a combination of awareness and coping, recovery, and learning from adverse experiences (Sun et al., 2022). Digital resilience is strongly related to digital literacy and psychological health, as knowledgeable users are better equipped to assess risks, seek assistance, set limits and engage in healthy behaviours online. It can also contribute to managing their reputation, communicating with their customers,

maintaining creative continuity, and recovering from digitally mediated setbacks in business for Generation Z entrepreneurs, creators, freelancers, and platform workers. Table 1 outlines the definitions of the key constructs and their roles in the proposed analytical framework.

Table 1. Core Constructs and Their Analytical Roles

Construct	Meaning	Main manifestations	Role in the framework
Emotional awareness	Recognition and identification of emotions produced by online experiences	Anxiety, envy, anger, insecurity, rejection, and validation seeking	Starting point for identifying social media stress
Emotional regulation	Ability to manage emotional intensity and select appropriate responses	Pausing, cognitive reframing, impulse control, empathy, and boundary setting	Converts emotional awareness into deliberate action
Social media-induced stress	Strain occurring when online demands exceed perceived coping resources	Social comparison, information overload, cyberbullying, constant visibility, and fear of missing out	Primary triggering condition
Adaptive digital coping	Cognitive and behavioural actions used to manage online pressure	Selective disengagement, help-seeking, privacy adjustment, mindful use, and support mobilisation	Immediate response mechanism
Digital resilience	Capacity to anticipate, manage, recover from, and learn through adverse digital experiences	Risk recognition, recovery, behavioural adaptation, and continued safe participation	Central mediating pathway
Sustainable entrepreneurial well-being	Ability to maintain psychological health, creativity, ethical engagement, and venture participation over time	Productivity, customer trust, innovation, persistence, and business continuity	Long-term personal and entrepreneurial outcome

4. Generation Z and the Social Media Stress Environment

4.1 Patterns and Purposes of Social Media Engagement

Social media served as a tool for social media communication, expression of identity, entertainment, learning, job discovery, and networking for Generation Z. These platforms also helped people become personal brands, create content, interact with their customers and see entrepreneurial opportunities. In the Chinese context, the online participation of youth was influenced by the nature of information exchange and social contact, as well as that of intergenerational communication, while at times, excessive demands resulted in withdrawal (Liu & He, 2021). Further, cross-national data from 154,981 adolescents across 29 countries supported the distinction between frequent engagement and problematic use: intensive engagement was not always associated with negative outcomes, but was positively related to some domains of adolescent well-being in several countries (Boer et al., 2020). Frequency was not the only factor—purpose and quality also were important. The learning, networking, customer communication, market discovery, or venture promotion motivation may generate opportunities for the entrepreneur, while the compulsive monitoring and validation seeking may have negative impacts on emotional health and entrepreneurial participation.

4.2 Major Sources of Social Media-Induced Stress

Stress due to social media surfaced as a result of social comparisons, fear of missing out, compulsive checking, information overload, privacy concerns, and pressure to be "seen." Uncertainty and user reactions around content performance, reputation and social acceptance grew as a result of algorithmics. In addition to these challenges, for Gen Z entrepreneurs and content creators, there could be customer criticism, lack of engagement, fluctuating platform visibility, concerns about losing market visibility, and the expectation of having to be present in every moment of the business. Compulsive use, social media fatigue, and fear of missing out (FOMO) lead to information overload, which in turn contributes to social media fatigue (Qin et al., 2024), and social media fatigue was found to be correlated with social anxiety and lurking. Emotional discomfort, measured as psychological distress, fear of missing out, and boredom proneness, accounted for 56.5% of the variance in social media addiction among the 505 Indian adolescents aged 12–17 years, underscoring the role of emotional distress in maintaining social media consumption. (Malik et al., 2024)

4.3 Consequences for Generation Z

Anxiety, emotional exhaustion, diminished concentration, disturbed sleep, withdrawal and decreased academic

or productive functioning were the results of stress at engagement. A sample of 6,595 U.S. adolescents found that increased social media use correlated with increased likelihood of internalizing and behavioral issues, with social media use exceeding 3 hours being associated with increased risk (Riehm et al., 2019). Scott et al. (2019) used data from 11,872 British children aged 13 to 15 years, to conclude that at least some of the effects of heavier use were associated with delays in sleep time and less sleep. However, it did not work for everybody: the majority of adolescents did not have a connection between use and well-being, while smaller groups improved or worsened (Beyens et al., 2020). In the entrepreneurial context, continual stress can also diminish creativity, decision-making, customer responsiveness, opportunity identification, and the intention to pursue a digitally mediated business.

5. Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Social Media-Induced Stress

5.1 Emotional Recognition and Stress Appraisal

Emotional recognition allows Gen Z consumers to recognise anxiety, envy, rejection, and the seeking for validation before it affects online behaviour. Lower trait emotional intelligence was related to problematic social media use for self-presentation and time passing motives among 444 emerging adults indicating that emotional self-knowledge is related with the reasons people stay on social media (Süral et al., 2019). Additional evidence obtained from 2,068 Spanish adolescents revealed that low emotional intelligence was mediated by perceived stress and depressive symptoms, which enabled the adolescent to be more vulnerable to maladaptive use of social media (Arrivillaga et al., 2022). Accurate appraisal can then distinguish interpersonal threats from vague comments, from delayed responses, as well as from popularity cues.

5.2 Emotional Regulation and Adaptive Social Media Use

Emotional regulation can enhance the adaptiveness of platform use by decreasing impulsive posting, reducing compulsive checking, and reducing the impact of criticism when using the platform. Its contribution was found to be different depending on the level of smartphone addiction and it was correlated with quality of life in a study that included 215 middle-school students in Italy (Mascia et al., 2020). Among the 1448 students from nine Chinese universities, the relationship between emotional intelligence and problematic social media use became negative, and social exclusion and experiential avoidance mediated this relationship (Guan et al., 2025). Avoidance can then be replaced by helping to set boundaries, disengage mindfully, seek for help, and reappraise their thoughts. These methods can help young entrepreneurs and creators avoid a backlash of customer criticism, poor sales, low engagement, or uncertainty, for example, that could lead to reactive communication, damage to their image, and withdrawal from the market.

5.3 Empathy and Online Relationship Management

Empathy enhances the management of relationships by providing the ability to understand tone, identify others' emotions, and respond without aggravating conflict. Based on a synthesis of 25 studies, the authors determined that the dimensions of emotional intelligence (EI) that correlated with social media involvement were such as empathy, self-esteem, and emotion regulation; empathy had a positive correlation with social media involvement, but the results varied across the studies (Piccerillo & Digennaro, 2025). Among 201 young adults, emotional intelligence was found to be correlated with lower levels of social media stress and improved mental health and trait emotional intelligence protected against association between stress and depressive symptoms (Sundvik & Davis, 2023). Supportive interaction can therefore enhance 'belonging', conflict resolution and coping. This relational skill is particularly relevant for sustaining customer trust, team coordination, negotiating, managing reputation, and working cooperatively in digitally mediated projects and initiatives.

6. From Emotional Awareness to Digital Resilience

6.1 Development of Digital Resilience

Emotional awareness helped the young users to recognise discomfort, to identify its source and to select a measured response, which led to digital resilience. Then regulation turned recognition into coping which involved "pausing," "reframing," "setting boundaries," and "seeking support. In terms of resilience, the Chinese adolescents' score of 3.5038 was slightly above average; however, there was a relatively low score for active learning, indicating that such skills needed further development (Qi, 2024). Enabling users to change privacy settings, expectations and ways of dealing with support after bad interactions. A 6-week program with 10 undergraduates from Singapore demonstrated the ability to deliberately cultivate resilience skills using structured digital learning, practice, and feedback (Ang et al., 2022).

6.2 Protective and Risk Pathways

Emotional intelligence served as a protective resource, dampening the automatic responses to criticism, exclusion, misinformation, or hostility on the Internet. Digital resilience converted this resource into recovery,

empowering users to identify risk, access support, and re-establish safe participation. This process was structured into seven phases: PROTECT – Problem recognition, Outreach, Support coordination, Training, Expert engagement, Continual support, Safety measures (Freed et al., 2025). There was still a risk that was reciprocal. Negative emotions and depressed mood may result from harmful digital activity and stress may lead to additional risky engagement. Such a cycle may be disrupted by active management of both the online behaviours and emotional responses (Sonuga-Barke et al., 2024).

6.3 Influencing Conditions

Digital resilience was found to be dependent on the activities young people engaged in online, the levels of engagement and whether it was active, purposeful or passive. Exposure and coping was a product of gender, culture, socioeconomic resources, family support and previous mental health. The platform design also played a role in visibility, comparisons, recommendation patterns, and reporting tools. Digital literacy was not enough without the social support or confidence of users in making confident judgments about uncertain information. In a recent study (Hassoun et al., 2025), 77 participants, aged 13-26, in the U.S. and India analyzed online content using socially informed "information sensibility" and peer networks.

The evidence confirmed an integrated pathway, where, emotional stress was experienced in response to the social media stressors which were initially identified by emotional awareness that was then managed by emotional understanding and regulation. These emotional skills translated to digital resilience, which in turn aided sustainable personal, professional and entrepreneurial engagement. The power of this pathway was influenced by platform design, digital literacy, social support, cultural expectations, socioeconomic resources and the quality of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. To summarise the findings of the aforementioned empirical studies, Table 2 consolidates the key findings of studies on social media-related stress, emotional intelligence, digital resilience, and entrepreneurial well-being among various populations and contexts.

Table 2. Selected Evidence on Social Media Stress, Emotional Intelligence, and Digital Resilience

Study	Population and context	Principal finding	Relevance to the proposed pathway
Riehm et al. (2019)	6,595 adolescents in the United States	Greater time spent on social media was associated with higher odds of internalising and externalising problems, with use beyond three hours indicating heightened risk.	Demonstrates that intensive exposure can operate as a psychological stress condition.
Scott et al. (2019)	11,872 British adolescents aged 13–15 years	Heavier social media use was associated with later sleep and poorer sleep patterns.	Shows how social media stress may affect recovery, concentration, and daily functioning.
Boer et al. (2020)	154,981 adolescents across 29 countries	Intense use and problematic use produced different outcomes; frequent engagement was not uniformly harmful.	Supports the distinction between ordinary participation and maladaptive involvement.
Malik et al. (2024)	505 Indian adolescents aged 12–17 years	Psychological distress, fear of missing out, and boredom proneness explained 56.5% of the variance in social media addiction.	Identifies emotional discomfort and fear of exclusion as pathways into maladaptive use.
Arrivillaga et al. (2022)	2,068 Spanish adolescents	Lower emotional intelligence was linked with problematic social media use through perceived stress and depressive symptoms.	Supports the indirect pathway from emotional competence to online behaviour through psychological distress.
Mascia et al. (2020)	215 Italian middle-school students	Self-regulation was associated with quality of life, while its effects varied according to smartphone-addiction levels.	Shows that behavioural control influences whether digital engagement supports or weakens well-being.
Guan et al. (2025)	1,448 students from nine Chinese universities	Emotional intelligence was negatively associated with problematic social media use; social exclusion and experiential avoidance mediated part of the relationship.	Demonstrates how emotional intelligence may reduce maladaptive engagement through healthier coping.
Sundvik and Davis (2023)	201 young adults	Emotional intelligence was associated with lower social media stress and	Provides direct evidence of the protective role of

		better mental health and buffered the relationship between stress and depressive symptoms.	emotional intelligence.
Qi (2024)	Chinese adolescents	The reported digital resilience score was 3.5038, while active learning remained comparatively weak.	Indicates that resilience can be present while particular adaptive skills still require development.
Kipkosgei (2022)	204 entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurial stress reduced well-being, well-being strengthened resilience, and online social support reinforced the relationship.	Extends the framework from personal digital coping to sustainable entrepreneurial participation.
Emmanuel et al. (2022)	241 female students with entrepreneurial intentions in China	Perceived usefulness, enjoyment, social influence, and ease of use shaped social-media-based entrepreneurial behaviour.	Demonstrates that social platforms are also environments for entrepreneurial opportunity and participation.

6.4 Integrated Conceptual Framework

The synthesis was in line with a process model that suggested that social media stressors caused emotional responses to be recognized by emotional awareness and then understood by emotional understanding. The consequences of those reactions were influenced by regulation. Negative experiences were reframed, support was sought, privacy was managed, and disengagement was selective when users paused, changed the perspective on negative interactions, reached out for support, changed privacy settings, or selectively disengaged.Emotional competence was transformed into digital resilience when users paused, reframed negative experiences, sought support, changed privacy settings, and/or selectively disengaged. Resilience then facilitated recovery, learning and ongoing engagement without normalisation of harmful platform behaviours. The pathway is not presumed to be automatic or equal for all members of Generation Z; the design of the platform, digital literacy, the presence and quality of social support, cultural expectations, socioeconomic resources, previous mental health, and quality of entrepreneurial ecosystem can either bolster or impede each step. In the context of entrepreneurship, the impact was felt beyond the individual. Resilience may maintain customer relationships, creative continuity, decision quality, professional reputation, and the desire to stay engaged following periods of low visibility, criticism, poor sales or platform disruption. The model then placed digital resilience as the main adaptive mechanism between emotional intelligence and sustainable well-being of entrepreneurs. Additionally, it acknowledged that the individual is not solely responsible. The possibilities for young users to receive training, reporting systems, recovery time, mentoring and psychological support depended on the help from the universities, incubators, employers, platforms, and public institutions. The basic contextual factors and sequence are shown in Figure 1.

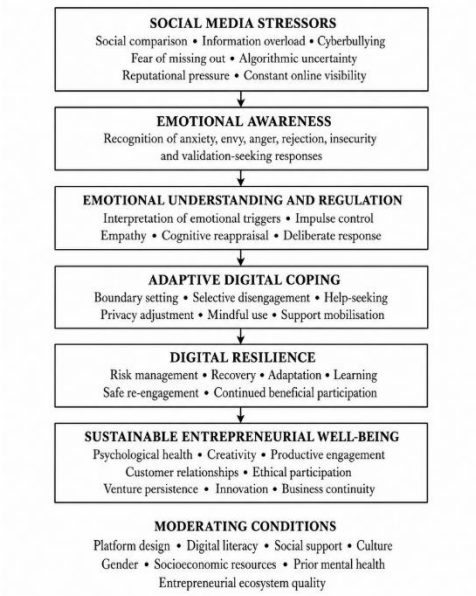

Figure 1. Integrated Pathway From Emotional Awareness to Sustainable Entrepreneurial Well-Being

7. Digital Resilience, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainability in Asia

7.1 Generation Z in Digital Entrepreneurship

Social media provided Generation Z with easy access to business creation, networking, market research, promotion, communicating with customers, and personal branding. While digital platforms lowered the barriers to entry, they also put young entrepreneurs, creators, freelancers and platform workers under constant scrutiny, in front of fast feedback, at risk of reputational damage, and subject to unpredictable algorithms. The 2022 Global Assessment of Digital Environments that Support Entrepreneurs found four-fifths of developing Asian economies were near the bottom of the ranking with poor access to digital environments that support entrepreneurs (Asian Development Bank, 2022). A total of 241 female students who were interested in entrepreneurship in China were used to test the results of perceived usefulness, enjoyment, social influence and ease of use on social-media-based entrepreneurial behaviour, which showed that these constructs had significant impact on social-media-based entrepreneurial behaviour (Emmanuel et al., 2022).

7.2 Sustainable Entrepreneurial Well-Being

Sustainable entrepreneurial well-being is defined as the ability to function with psychological health, creativity, ethical engagement in digital platforms, productivity and engagement in venture without chronic burnout or negative platform reliance. Digital resilience played its part in helping young entrepreneurs to bounce back from customer criticism, platform disruption, low sales, damaged reputations and uncertainty, and maintaining motivation and good decision making. The results of 204 entrepreneurs indicated that entrepreneurial stress was shown to decrease well-being, while well-being was found to enhance entrepreneurial resilience, and perceived online social support had a reinforcing effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial stress and well-being (Kipkosgei, 2022). Individual coping was also not enough to guarantee sustainable outcomes as decent work, economic stability, inclusive opportunity structures and supportive digital ecosystems were also all necessary (Alzamel, 2024).

7.3 Asian and Emerging-Economy Contexts

The landscape of entrepreneurship in Asia is diverse and significant disparities exist in infrastructure, finance, digital skills, regulation, platform access and institutional support. Collective reputation, family involvement, cultural expectations, and an awareness of social judgment can also shape the meaning of success, failure, and entrepreneurial risk for Generation Z. The national environments were evaluated using the Global Index of Digital Entrepreneurship Systems, which measured the country levels with regards to general conditions, structural conditions and digital conditions and Singapore and the Republic of Korea were more favourable than many Asian developing countries (Autio et al., 2024). Digital resilience, however, should be seen at the personal and ecosystem level. Whilst emotional competence can help to cope, participation is needed in the long term with affordable connectivity, inclusive finance, entrepreneurship education, accessible mental health support, responsible platform governance and institutions that ensure the protection of young digital workers and entrepreneurs.

7.4 Contextual Interpretation Across Asian Digital Economies

The Asian relevance of the framework needs to be understood in the context of the diversity, not a single description of culture in Asia. In very connected economies, the requirements of generation Z users could lead to heavy competition in platforms, shorter content cycles, and expectations of constant responsiveness. For those who are developing digital markets, emotional pressures can be added to unreliable internet connections, difficulty accessing finance, and employment in non-standard work arrangements, and reliance on a few commercial platforms. Collective reputation and family expectations may also influence the emotional significance of entrepreneurial success, criticism of the entrepreneur or entrepreneurial failure. All these conditions may affect the nature of social media – as an opportunity or as a tool of surveillance or as a combination of both. Digital resilience in Asia is about more than just personal resilience. It requires entrepreneurship education, mentoring, affordable access to digital, fair platform practices, accessible mental-health services, and institutional support for young entrepreneurs and creators. Programmes developed in one country should not be simply exported to another. Training should mirror local languages, family structures, employment, platform preferences and attitudes to help-seeking. Comparative research should also provide some separation between the formal start-up founder, student entrepreneurs, social sellers, freelancers, influencers and gig workers, as their commercial and reputational risk exposure can vary significantly. Rural and peri-urban entrepreneurs could face other challenges than metropolitan creators and women and economically disadvantaged users might have further safety, mobility and financing challenges. This contextual approach enhances the sustainability case as it brings together emotional competence and inclusive participation, decent digital labour and the sustainability of nascent entrepreneurial ecosystems over time.

8. Results and Discussion

8.1 Emotional Intelligence, Stress, and Digital Resilience

The evidence together suggested a sequence of emotional intelligence's impact on social media-induced stress rather than a single direct impact. Users were able to recognize comparison, rejection, anxiety, anger and seeking validation through emotional awareness. Understanding of emotion helped them to make sense of these responses and regulation helped them to make intentional instead of impulsive responses. These capacities that resulted in boundary setting, cognitive reframing, help-seeking, and selective disengagement all helped to create digital resilience. Digital resilience was thus the adaptive strategy that allowed emotional competence to buffer against adverse effects on well-being in repeated online challenges.

8.2 Relevance to Sustainable Digital Entrepreneurship

This path has special significance for Generation Z's involvement in digital entrepreneurship. Social media use is no longer just social, but it's also a business platform for branding, customer engagement, product promotion, networking, content monetisation and opportunity identification. Young entrepreneurs are then subjected to both the normal pressures of society and to the demands of the business, such as exposure to public criticism, a limited visibility on platforms, constant communication with customers and reliance on engagement metrics. Emotional intelligence could diminish the tendency to make decisions out of emotion, and digital resilience could enhance business creativity, confidence, business reputation and business participation following failures. The linkage of psychological coping into entrepreneurship demonstrates that psychological coping resources can affect digitally mediated work continuity.

8.3 Theoretical and Practical Contribution

Sustainability is not just about continuing to be active in the online world. It is a process of keeping an individual psychologically healthy, acting ethically, engaging in productive work, interacting with customers, being innovative, and being involved in entrepreneurship in the long run. These outcomes are influenced by people's capacity and their environment. Asian digital economies are characterized by various disparities in infrastructure, cultural expectations, financial access, institutional support and platform dependence. Digital resilience, as a result, cannot be seen as a personal responsibility. The role of positioning young people in environments where they can take part without being over-emotionally affected is shared by universities, incubators, enterprises, platforms and public institutions.

The main conceptual value is the linkage of emotional intelligence with sustainable digital entrepreneurship via digital resilience. Emotional intelligence gives the inner strength to sense and manage emotional stress, and digital resilience helps to adapt and recover. They can help to encourage improved and longer-term engagement in entrepreneurial activities on platforms.

The theoretical contribution of the article is the combination of the constructs that are often studied in different circles of research. Emotional intelligence is the understanding of emotion: their identification, comprehension, and management. Social media-induced stress is the identification of the digital demands that activate those experiences. The concepts of digital resilience and sustainable entrepreneurial well-being continue digital adversity, by explaining how users adapt, recover and learn from it, and how they continue to participate creatively and economically. Linking these together makes the psychological/entrepreneurial implications of exposure more apparent. The same negative comment/call-off, the same loss of reach, the same customer complaint could be experienced by 2 users, but each demonstrates a different response due to the emotional appraisal, coping resources, and surrounding support. The framework also moves away from a binary logic of Keep or Remove from circulation of Digital. To be able to sustain participation, they must be able to stay involved in a process that can change negative behaviors, gain support support systems and preserve recovery time. This provides a viewpoint of a person, platform, and ecosystem for entrepreneurship scholarship. Personal capabilities determine coping processes; platform structures determine exposure; ecosystem conditions determine access to resources. Future models can adopt this framework as a mediator in the model of digital resilience or platform design, social support as a moderating factor, or cultural context as a moderating factor. It can also contribute to developing metrics that reflect venture outcomes, like perseverance, quality of customer interactions, creative continuity, ethical involvement, and rebound from setbacks that are visible on the internet. Moderately, the model serves as a shared terminology for teachers, incubator managers, employers, counsellors and platform developers. It enables targeting of interventions to the point of difficulty: awareness training when emotional triggers are not well recognised, support for regulation when reactions become impulsive, resilience training when recovery is lacking, and ecosystem reform when individual competence is undermined due to unsafe or exploitative digital contexts.

8.4 Limitations

There are a number of restrictions to be considered when interpreting the scores. Adolescents, university students, emerging adults, and young adults were grouped together in the evidence base as the features of the "Generation Z" varied across publications. The groups have similar overall digital experiences, although they vary in terms of their developmental stages, employment status, financial responsibilities and exposure to entrepreneurship. Consequently, the results from general social media users can not be transferred automatically to the founders, freelancers, creators or platform workers. Many of the studies that were available were also cross-sectional, and they used self-reported platform use, emotional intelligence, stress, or well-being. These designs detect

correlations, but do not show which variables may influence the others and which are influenced by others. The concept of digital resilience was also different across studies, making it hard to compare. Evidence from Asia was accumulating but was not uniform and a few countries and informal modes of digital entrepreneurship were underrepresented. The results obtained in platform environments may be volatile as the platforms evolve quickly, and the results obtained from one service, algorithm or time period may not be stable. The full integrative approach allowed for a wide-ranging conceptual synthesis without the use of a formal risk of bias instrument or statistical pooling. Conclusions are therefore evidence-based arguments, not causal models. Further studies should evaluate the suggested pathway over time, assess behavioral indicators as well as self-reported indicators, and analyse impacts of institutional and platform-level interventions on outcomes across entrepreneurial groups. There is also a need to pay greater attention to the gender, socioeconomic position, disability, rural–urban differences and culturally specific help-seeking practices to bolster the inclusiveness and utility of the evidence. Future evidence should also include the type of platform, business model, country, urban or rural setting, and commercial reliance of platform users on social media. More standardized reporting would help to distinguish normal stress on-line from stress which is jeopardizing income, business continuity and/or business identity.

9. Implications and Future Research Directions

9.1 Educational and Entrepreneurial Implications

Emotional intelligence training needs to be integrated with digital resilience exercises in Universities and entrepreneurship programmes. Students might be able to learn how to identify their emotions, modify their thoughts, to set boundaries and find a healthy response to online criticism. Llistosella et al. (2023) conducted a review of 27 studies to examine the effects of school-based resilience programmes on students' resilience. They found that these interventions had a moderate, positive short-term effect on students' resilience, although the impact varied across programmes. Structured teaching was also shown to enhance coping, emotional regulation, and other psychological skills in 578 at-risk adolescents who participated in a 6-session intervention over 6 weeks (Llistosella et al., 2024). A similar module in incubation and employability courses might equip Generation Z with the skills needed for sustainable digital jobs, a future of entrepreneurial volatility, and platform work.

9.2 Organisational, Platform, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, and Policy Implications

Digital-work policies must be put in place in organisations in order to reduce constant availability, safeguard recovery time and offer mental health support for young entrepreneurs, creators and platform workers. While social media abstinence is a viable option, the evidence from 23 studies indicated that there were some instances where well-being increased (39%), others where it got worse (30%) and others where it didn't change (30%) (Plackett et al., 2023). Platforms should have default privacy settings, age-appropriate design, reporting systems that are easy to use, and discouraging overuse. The task-force report additionally included recommendations for safer design, privacy safeguards, caregiver resources, and a coordinated research program for online well-being for young people (Kids Online Health and Safety Task Force, 2024). Table 3 highlights actions by the stakeholders to boost emotional intelligence, digital resilience and sustainable engagement in digital and entrepreneurial environments.

Table 3. Practical Actions for Strengthening Emotional Intelligence and Digital Resilience

Stakeholder	Recommended action	Problem addressed	Expected contribution
Universities and colleges	Integrate emotional awareness, emotion regulation, digital literacy, and resilience exercises into academic and employability programmes.	Poor recognition of online emotional triggers, compulsive engagement, and limited coping knowledge.	Healthier platform use, improved concentration, better emotional regulation, and stronger preparation for digital careers.
Entrepreneurship programmes and incubators	Provide training on customer criticism, reputational pressure, platform uncertainty, boundary setting, and recovery after venture setbacks.	Emotional exhaustion, fear of failure, reactive communication, and premature entrepreneurial withdrawal.	Greater founder confidence, venture persistence, decision quality, and sustainable entrepreneurial well-being.
Employers and digital-work organisations	Establish limits on constant availability, protect recovery time, provide counselling support, and develop clear digital communication expectations.	Continuous connectivity, blurred work boundaries, burnout, and emotional overload.	Improved psychological safety, productivity, employee retention, and responsible digital-work practices.
Social media platforms	Use privacy-protective defaults, transparent recommendation systems, accessible reporting mechanisms, age-appropriate design, and features that	Cyberbullying, information overload, harmful comparison, unsafe interaction, and algorithmic uncertainty.	Safer engagement, stronger user control, reduced exposure to harmful content, and improved platform trust.

	discourage excessive engagement.		
Policymakers and public institutions	Support affordable connectivity, digital education, mental-health services, decent platform work, inclusive finance, and protection for young digital workers.	Unequal access to resources, insecure digital labour, weak institutional support, and regional disparities.	More inclusive digital participation and stronger entrepreneurial ecosystems across Asian economies.
Families, mentors, and peer networks	Encourage open discussion of online stress, emotional help-seeking, responsible platform habits, and non-punitive support after harmful experiences.	Shame, isolation, poor help-seeking, and dependence on individual coping.	Stronger social support, earlier intervention, and improved recovery after online adversity.
Researchers	Conduct longitudinal, cross-cultural, and platform-specific studies involving founders, freelancers, creators, student entrepreneurs, and gig workers.	Limited causal evidence, inconsistent measures, and insufficient representation of Asian entrepreneurial groups.	Better measurement, stronger causal models, culturally responsive interventions, and evidence-based policy.

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