

**EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN
NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (NCC), ABUJA**

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ABSTRACT

Suboptimal employee performance persists in Nigerian public sector organisations despite investment in human capital development, yet the role of emotional intelligence (EI) dimensions remains empirically underexplored within regulatory agencies. This study examined the effect of emotional intelligence on Employee Performance in the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Abuja. The study adopted a quantitative survey research design, with a sample size of 360 NCC employees, and data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results revealed that Social Awareness exerted a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance, while Self-Management and Relationship Management each had a negative but significant effect on employee's performance. The study concluded that employees who possess a higher level of social awareness such as the ability to understand colleagues' emotions, recognize organizational dynamics, and respond appropriately to social situations are more likely to perform effectively in their roles. It is also concluded that although employees demonstrate the ability to regulate their emotions, control impulses, and manage personal behaviour in the workplace, excessive or poorly applied self-management may inadvertently reduce their level of performance. The study recommends that the NCC should invest in social awareness training programmes, implement workload and employee assistance interventions to mitigate self-regulatory resource depletion, and redesign its performance appraisal system to capture relational and citizenship performance dimensions alongside technical task output.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Management, Employee Performance.*

INTRODUCTION

Organisations in the 21st century operate in dynamic and competitive environments that demand more than technical competence from their workforce. The growing recognition that cognitive ability alone is insufficient to predict employee performance has redirected managerial attention towards emotional competencies, particularly emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence,

broadly defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and utilise emotions effectively in oneself and others, has emerged as a critical determinant of individual and organisational performance (Mayer et al., 2021). As public sector organisations in Nigeria confront mounting pressure to deliver quality services and achieve institutional mandates, the role of emotional intelligence in shaping employee behaviour and output has become a subject of substantial academic and practical interest.

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), established under the Nigerian Communications Act of 2003, serves as the apex regulatory body for the Nigerian telecommunications sector. As an agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the NCC is saddled with the responsibility of regulating and supervising communications services and infrastructure in the country (NCC, 2023). Given the highly technical and stakeholder-sensitive nature of its mandate, the performance of employees within the NCC is pivotal to the realisation of national communications policy objectives. Employees are regularly required to manage complex regulatory decisions, interact with industry stakeholders, and navigate bureaucratic processes contexts in which emotional competencies are particularly salient.

Research has shown that emotionally intelligent employees are better positioned to manage workplace stress, engage constructively with colleagues and clients, and sustain high levels of performance over time (Fiori et al., 2022; Abubakar & Daniel, 2016). The components of emotional intelligence self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management collectively constitute the Goleman (1995) four-domain framework, which remains one of the most widely cited and empirically tested models in organisational behaviour research. Social awareness refers to the ability to understand the emotions of others and to empathise with stakeholders, while self-management concerns the regulation of one's own impulses and emotional reactions in the pursuit of goals. Relationship management involves the deployment of emotional skills to inspire, influence, and develop others, as well as to manage conflict effectively (Goleman et al., 2022).

Extant literature documents a predominantly positive relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance across diverse national and organisational contexts (Nasir & Masrur, 2022; Ugoani, 2023). However, much of the existing evidence has been generated in Western or East Asian settings, with relatively limited empirical attention paid to the Nigerian public sector context. The NCC, as a technically specialised regulatory agency, provides a unique and underexplored institutional environment within

which to examine the relationship between specific dimensions of emotional intelligence and employee performance. Furthermore, the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)—a statistically robust analytical technique—addresses methodological limitations in prior studies that relied on ordinary least squares regression or simple correlation analyses (Hair et al., 2022).

This study therefore examines the effect of emotional intelligence—specifically social awareness, self-management, and relationship management—on employee performance in the NCC, Abuja. By situating the inquiry within a rigorous theoretical and empirical framework, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on human resource management in Nigerian public institutions.

Despite the significant investment in human capital development within Nigerian public sector organisations, the issue of suboptimal employee performance remains a persistent concern. At the Nigerian Communications Commission, anecdotal evidence and official performance audit reports suggest that a subset of employees struggles to meet performance benchmarks, particularly in roles requiring sustained stakeholder engagement, interpersonal coordination, and regulatory decision-making under pressure (NCC, 2023). While structural and technical factors have been widely investigated as determinants of this performance gap, the role of emotional intelligence has received comparatively scant empirical attention within the NCC context.

The existing literature, though largely supportive of the emotional intelligence–performance nexus, presents several unresolved issues. First, most studies in the Nigerian context have adopted composite or unidimensional measures of emotional intelligence, thereby obscuring the differential effects of specific EI dimensions on performance outcomes (Ugoani, 2023; Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2022). Second, the predominance of cross-sectional survey designs and basic regression analyses in prior studies limits the ability to assess complex relationships among latent constructs. Third, the theoretical underpinnings of most Nigerian-based EI studies are insufficiently developed,

with limited integration of established frameworks such as the Ability-Based Model (Mayer et al., 2021) or the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977).

These gaps indicate a need for a study that disaggregates the dimensions of emotional intelligence, applies a theoretically grounded framework, and employs a robust methodological approach to examine the EI-performance relationship at the NCC. Failure to address these gaps means that human resource managers and policymakers continue to rely on incomplete or methodologically limited evidence in formulating strategies to improve employee performance. This study is therefore designed to fill these gaps. The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on employee performance in the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Abuja. The specific objectives are to:

- i. determine the effect of social awareness on employee performance in Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Abuja.
- ii. investigate the effect of self-management on employee performance in Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Abuja and;
- iii. investigate the effect of relationship management on employee performance in Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Abuja.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence was formally introduced into scientific discourse by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and later popularised by Goleman (1995). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action. Subsequent refinements by

Mayer et al. (2021) led to the development of the ability model, which conceptualises EI as a set of four hierarchically arranged mental abilities: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions. This model grounds EI in objective cognitive capacities rather than self-reported personality traits, thereby enhancing its discriminant validity from related constructs such as personality and general mental ability.

Goleman's (1995) mixed model broadened the conceptualisation of EI to include personal and social competencies, organised into four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. This framework, often referred to as the competency-based model, has found widespread application in organisational and management research due to its practical relevance and ease of operationalisation (Goleman et al., 2022). Bar-On's (1997) model further expanded the construct to encompass intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management, and general mood, producing a broader construct labelled emotional-social intelligence. Despite ongoing debates about construct validity (Fiori et al., 2022), there is broad consensus that EI encompasses the ability to identify, understand, use, and regulate emotions in ways that promote effective individual and interpersonal functioning.

For the purposes of this study, emotional intelligence is conceptualised along Goleman's four-domain framework, with specific focus on social awareness, self-management, and relationship management as the independent variables.

Social Awareness

Social awareness refers to the capacity to accurately read and understand the emotional states, motivations, and perspectives of other individuals and groups (Goleman et al., 2022). It encompasses empathy the ability to sense others' emotions and take an active interest in their concerns as well as organisational awareness, defined as the ability to read group dynamics and the unwritten rules and power structures of organisations. Social awareness further includes service orientation, which

involves the recognition and meeting of the needs of clients, customers, and subordinates (Nasir & Masrur, 2022).

In an organisational context, socially aware employees are better equipped to navigate interpersonal relationships, anticipate conflicts, and respond sensitively to the emotional needs of colleagues and stakeholders. This competency is particularly relevant in public sector organisations where employees regularly engage with diverse constituencies and must exercise discretionary judgement in service delivery (Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2022). Social awareness is measured in this study using validated items assessing empathic accuracy, perspective-taking, and stakeholder sensitivity.

Self-Management

Self-management, also referred to as self-regulation, is the ability to manage one's internal states, impulses, and resources. It encompasses emotional self-control the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses in check; adaptability flexibility in responding to changing situations; achievement orientation the drive to improve performance standards; and initiative readiness to act proactively (Mayer et al., 2021). Individuals high in self-management are capable of channelling their emotions productively, maintaining composure under pressure, and persisting in the pursuit of goals despite setbacks and frustrations.

Self-management is considered a core emotional competency because it mediates the translation of emotional awareness into effective action (Fiori et al., 2022). Employees who can regulate their emotions are less prone to impulsive decision-making, interpersonal conflicts, and performance degradation under stress. Conversely, low self-management has been associated with absenteeism, counterproductive work behaviours, and diminished task performance (Brackett et al., 2021). In this study, self-management is operationalised through items measuring emotional regulation, adaptability, and proactive work behaviour.

Relationship Management

Relationship management refers to the skill of using emotional information to manage

interactions successfully with others. It includes competencies such as inspirational leadership the ability to guide individuals and groups; influence wielding effective persuasion tactics; conflict management the ability to negotiate and resolve disagreements; teamwork and collaboration; and developing others through coaching and mentorship (Goleman et al., 2022). Relationship management builds on the other three EI domains self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness and represents the apex of practical emotional competence in organisational settings.

Employees with strong relationship management skills tend to foster cooperative work environments, build trust with supervisors and peers, and contribute to organisational citizenship behaviours (Ugoani, 2023). These competencies are especially important in regulatory agencies such as the NCC, where officials must balance the competing interests of telecommunications operators, consumers, and government while maintaining professional relationships with all parties. This study measures relationship management using items focused on interpersonal influence, conflict resolution, and collaborative behaviour.

Employee Performance

Employee performance is a multidimensional construct that encompasses the behaviours, outputs, and outcomes attributable to an individual employee in the context of their work role (Aguinis, 2023). Borman and Motowidlo's (1993) widely cited taxonomy distinguishes between task performance the proficiency with which employees execute formally prescribed job duties and contextual performance, which refers to voluntary behaviours that support the organisational, social, and psychological environment in which work is performed. More recent conceptualisations have added adaptive performance the ability to effectively alter behaviour in response to changes in the work environment as a third dimension (Pulakos et al., 2020).

In the context of Nigerian public sector organisations, performance is frequently measured against key performance indicators (KPIs), supervisory appraisals, and self-report scales. For the NCC specifically, employee

performance may encompass the quality and timeliness of regulatory decisions, responsiveness to stakeholder complaints, adherence to institutional procedures, and contribution to departmental goals (NCC, 2023). This study operationalises employee performance as a composite of task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance, consistent with widely used scales in the organisational behaviour literature (Aguinis, 2023).

Empirical Review

Social Awareness and Employee Performance

Empirical evidence on the relationship between social awareness and employee performance is largely affirmative. Nasir and Masrur (2022) conducted a cross-sectional study of 312 bank employees in Pakistan and found that social awareness was a significant positive predictor of task performance ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$), suggesting that employees who are more attuned to the emotional states of their colleagues and clients deliver higher quality service. The authors attributed this finding to the role of empathic accuracy in facilitating constructive stakeholder interactions and reducing interpersonal conflicts that might otherwise impede performance.

Similarly, Adeyemo and Adeleye (2022) examined the emotional intelligence–performance relationship among 256 civil servants in Oyo State, Nigeria, and reported that social awareness accounted for 18.3% of the variance in contextual performance, underscoring the importance of empathy and organisational awareness in public sector settings. The study found that employees with higher social awareness scores were more likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviours, suggesting a pathway from social awareness to both formal and informal performance domains.

Brackett et al. (2021) reviewed meta-analytic evidence spanning two decades and concluded that the social perception dimension of EI analogous to social awareness demonstrated consistent positive associations with supervisor-rated performance across a wide range of occupational contexts. Fiori et al.

(2022) similarly documented a significant positive relationship between empathic accuracy and supervisor performance ratings in a sample of 498 Italian managers, with the relationship being stronger in high-complexity roles requiring extensive interpersonal engagement a characteristic shared by many positions within the NCC.

Self-Management and Employee Performance

Ugoani (2023) investigated the impact of self-management on the job performance of 224 Nigerian bank employees and found that, contrary to expectations, self-management exhibited a negative but significant association with self-reported performance ($\beta = -0.19, p = 0.013$). The author interpreted this counter-intuitive finding as reflecting the costs of emotional suppression a component of self-management—which can deplete cognitive resources that would otherwise be directed towards task performance, consistent with ego depletion theory (Hagger et al., 2021). This interpretation suggests that high self-management, when operationalised as emotional suppression, may paradoxically impair performance by taxing executive function.

Okeke and Nwankwo (2022) similarly found a negative and significant relationship between emotional self-control and performance in a study of 198 Nigerian public servants ($\beta = -0.22, p = 0.009$). The authors noted that the regulatory demands of emotional self-control in rigid bureaucratic environments consumed cognitive resources, reducing employees' capacity for complex decision-making and innovative problem-solving. These findings are consistent with Baumeister et al.'s (2018) strength model of self-regulation, which posits that regulatory effort depletes a limited resource, thereby impairing subsequent performance.

Relationship Management and Employee Performance

In a study of 340 federal public servants in Nigeria, Okafor and Eze (2023) found that relationship management was negatively and significantly associated with individual task performance ($\beta = -0.18, p = 0.021$). The authors

argued that in rule-bound environments such as federal agencies, employees who invest heavily in interpersonal relationship maintenance may do so at the expense of task-focused activities, thereby reducing formal performance outcomes. This finding resonates with the concept of 'performance-citizenship trade-off,' which posits that employees may allocate limited time and energy between formal task performance and interpersonal citizenship behaviours in ways that produce a negative association between social investment and task productivity.

Adeoye and Torty (2021) corroborated these findings in a study of 275 public health administrators in Lagos, reporting a significant negative association between relationship management and standardised task performance ($r = -0.21, p < 0.05$), though the relationship was moderated by organisational culture, with the negative association being stronger in bureaucratic cultures. These findings collectively suggest that in regulatory and administrative organisations such as the NCC, the performance implications of relationship management may be more complex than suggested by mainstream EI theory.

Theoretical Framework

Ability-Based Model of Emotional Intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso)

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily drawn from the Ability-Based Model of Emotional Intelligence, developed by Mayer et al. (2021). This model conceptualises emotional intelligence as a set of four interrelated cognitive abilities: (1) the ability to perceive and express emotions accurately in oneself and others; (2) the ability to use emotions to facilitate thought; (3) the ability to understand and analyse emotional knowledge; and (4) the ability to reflectively regulate emotions in oneself and others, thereby promoting emotional and intellectual growth. Critically, the model arranges these abilities in a hierarchical structure, with emotional perception at the base and emotional management at the apex.

The ability model is particularly relevant to this study for three reasons. First, it provides a

theoretically rigorous grounding for the EI dimensions examined social awareness corresponds to the perception and understanding branches, self-management to the regulation branch, and relationship management to the integration of all four branches in interpersonal contexts. Second, the model's emphasis on EI as an intelligence rather than a personality trait or motivational disposition aligns with the study's focus on competency-based performance determinants. Third, the model generates clear predictions about the performance implications of specific EI dimensions, providing a basis for hypothesis formulation.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative survey research design. Survey designs are particularly appropriate for studies seeking to describe and explain relationships among constructs measured from a representative sample of respondents drawn from a defined population (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The cross-sectional nature of the survey design allowed for the simultaneous collection of data on emotional intelligence dimensions and employee performance within a single time frame, facilitating the examination of co-variation among variables.

The target population for this study comprised all permanent employees of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Abuja headquarters. According to the NCC's 2023 Annual Report, the organisation employed a total of 1,247 permanent staff across various departments at its Abuja headquarters, the sample size 400 was determined using Taro Yamin formula. Primary data were collected through a structured self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised four sections. Section A elicited demographic information from respondents, sections B through D measured the study's independent variables social awareness, self-management, and relationship management using adapted items drawn from Goleman's (2001) Emotional Competence Inventory and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) scales. Section E measured employee performance using items adapted from Aguinis'

(2023) performance assessment framework, encompassing task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance dimensions.

All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity assessment by three academic experts in human resource management and one senior NCC official. A pilot test was conducted with 40

employees drawn from a different NCC department, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.81 to 0.89 across all constructs, confirming the instrument's reliability prior to main data collection. Questionnaires were administered in hard copy with the assistance of trained research assistants, and the confidentiality of responses was assured to minimise social desirability bias. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), implemented in SmartPLS 4.0 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 360 respondents whose questionnaires were used in the analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 360)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender: Male	198	55.0
Gender: Female	162	45.0
Age: 21–30 years	89	24.7
Age: 31–40 years	143	39.7
Age: 41–50 years	98	27.2
Age: Above 50 years	30	8.3
Education: OND/HND	72	20.0
Education: B.Sc/B.A	178	49.4
Education: M.Sc/MBA	96	26.7
Education: Ph.D	14	3.9
Experience: 1–5 years	81	22.5
Experience: 6–10 years	129	35.8
Experience: 11–15 years	103	28.6
Experience: Above 15 years	47	13.1
Total	360	100.0

Note: Figures represent valid responses. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

As shown in Table 1, males constituted 55.0% of the sample and females 45.0%, indicating a moderately male-dominated workforce consistent with broader patterns in Nigerian federal agencies (NCC, 2023). The largest age cohort was 31–40 years (39.7%), suggesting a predominantly mid-career workforce. The majority of respondents held a first degree (B.Sc/B.A, 49.4%), with a combined 30.6% holding postgraduate qualifications, reflecting the NCC's reputation as a technically skilled organisation. Employees with 6–10 years of experience constituted the largest experience cohort (35.8%), indicating a relatively experienced workforce.

Measurement Model Assessment

Prior to testing the structural model, the measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity following the criteria prescribed by Hair et al. (2022). Table 2 presents the internal consistency and convergent validity results.

Table 2: Measurement Model – Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Loading Range
Social Awareness (SA)	0.847	0.891	0.623	0.714–0.831
Self-Management (SM)	0.832	0.876	0.601	0.703–0.817
Relationship Management (RM)	0.819	0.864	0.614	0.698–0.809
Employee Performance (EP)	0.861	0.903	0.639	0.728–0.843

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Threshold: $\alpha > 0.70$; CR > 0.70; AVE > 0.50.

All constructs met the threshold criteria for internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$; CR > 0.70) and convergent validity (AVE > 0.50), indicating that the items reliably and validly represent their respective constructs. Individual item loadings ranged from 0.698 to 0.843, all exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2022). Table 3 presents the discriminant validity results based on the HTMT criterion.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity – HTMT Matrix

Construct	SA	SM	RM
Social Awareness (SA)			
Self-Management (SM)	0.741		
Relationship Management (RM)	0.693	0.718	
Employee Performance (EP)	0.762	0.701	0.689

Note: HTMT values below 0.85 confirm discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2022). SA = Social Awareness; SM = Self-Management; RM = Relationship Management.

All HTMT values were below the 0.85 threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2022), confirming that the constructs are empirically distinct. The measurement model results collectively support the reliability and validity of the study's measures and provide a sound basis for structural model estimation.

Structural Model Results

The structural model was estimated using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap iterations to generate stable estimates of path coefficients, standard errors, t-statistics, and p-values. Table 4 presents the path analysis results, and Table 5 presents the model fit and effect size indices.

Table 4: Structural Model – Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1: SA → EP	0.342	0.047	7.277	0.000***	Supported
H2: SM → EP	-0.214	0.051	4.196	0.000***	Supported
H3: RM → EP	-0.187	0.049	3.816	0.001***	Supported

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$. SA = Social Awareness; SM = Self-Management; RM = Relationship Management; EP = Employee Performance. Bootstrap iterations = 5,000.

Table 5: Model Fit Indices and Effect Sizes

Model Fit Index	Value	Threshold
R ² (Employee Performance)	0.481	> 0.25 acceptable
Q ² (Predictive Relevance)	0.293	> 0
SRMR	0.061	< 0.08
NFI	0.912	> 0.90
f ² (SA → EP)	0.142	0.02–0.35 (small–large)
f ² (SM → EP)	0.063	0.02–0.35 (small–large)
f ² (RM → EP)	0.051	0.02–0.35 (small–large)

Note: SRMR = Standardised Root Mean Square Residual; NFI = Normed Fit Index; f² = Cohen's effect size. R² = 0.481 indicates that the three EI dimensions collectively explain 48.1% of the variance in employee performance.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis one posited that social awareness has no significant effect on employee performance in the NCC. The results in Table 4 reveal a positive and significant path coefficient (β = 0.342, t = 7.277, p = 0.000), confirming that social awareness exerts a positive and

significant effect on employee performance. Hypothesis one is therefore rejected. The effect size (f² = 0.142) indicates a medium practical significance of this relationship.

Hypothesis Two posited that self-management has a significant effect on employee performance in the NCC. The results show a

negative but significant path coefficient ($\beta = -0.214, t = 4.196, p = 0.000$), indicating that self-management has a negative and significant effect on employee performance. Although the direction of the relationship is negative, the statistical significance confirms the substantive importance of self-management as a determinant of performance. Hypothesis Two is therefore supported with a negative direction.

Hypothesis Three posited that relationship management has a significant effect on employee performance in the NCC. The results reveal a negative but significant path coefficient ($\beta = -0.187, t = 3.816, p = 0.001$), indicating that relationship management exerts a negative and significant effect on employee performance. Hypothesis Three is therefore supported with a negative direction. The effect size ($f^2 = 0.051$) indicates a small-to-medium practical significance.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that social awareness exerts a positive and significant effect on employee performance in the NCC ($\beta = 0.342, p = 0.000$) is consistent with the theoretical predictions of the ability-based model of EI (Mayer et al., 2021) and aligns with the preponderance of empirical evidence in the literature. The result corroborates Nasir and Masrur (2022), who found that social awareness was a significant positive predictor of task performance among bank employees, and Adeyemo and Adeleye (2022), who reported that social awareness significantly predicted contextual performance in Nigerian civil servants. The finding affirms that employees who possess higher levels of empathic accuracy and organisational awareness are better equipped to understand the expectations of supervisors, collaborate effectively with colleagues, and respond sensitively to stakeholder needs behaviours that collectively enhance both task and contextual performance.

The study revealed that self-management exhibits a negative but significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = -0.214, p = 0.000$) is counter-intuitive from the perspective of mainstream EI theory but is consistent with a growing body of empirical evidence in Nigerian and other bureaucratic public sector contexts. The result aligns with Ugoani (2023), who

found a negative self-management-performance association among Nigerian bank employees, and Okeke and Nwankwo (2022), who reported a similar finding among Nigerian public servants. The Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) provides a compelling theoretical explanation: the sustained effort required to regulate emotional impulses and maintain composure in the demanding NCC regulatory environment depletes the cognitive and motivational resources that employees would otherwise direct towards formal task performance.

The study revealed a negative and significant effect of relationship management on employee performance ($\beta = -0.187, p = 0.001$) echoes the findings of Okafor and Eze (2023) and Adeoye and Torty (2021), who documented similar negative associations in Nigerian federal agencies and public health organisations, respectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that employees who possess a higher level of social awareness such as the ability to understand colleagues' emotions, recognize organizational dynamics, and respond appropriately to social situations are more likely to perform effectively in their roles. It is also concluded that although employees demonstrate the ability to regulate their emotions, control impulses, and manage personal behaviour in the workplace, excessive or poorly applied self-management may inadvertently reduce their level of performance. Finally, the study concluded that excessive emphasis on maintaining interpersonal relationships, social interactions, or conflict avoidance may divert employees' attention from core job responsibilities and productivity-oriented tasks. In some cases, employees may devote considerable time to sustaining workplace relationships at the expense of efficiency and task completion.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

It is recommended that the management of the Nigerian Communications Commission should implement regular training and capacity-building programmes aimed at improving employees' emotional intelligence, particularly social awareness skills. Such programmes should focus on interpersonal communication, empathy development, conflict management, and teamwork in order to enhance employees' ability to understand and respond effectively to the emotions and needs of colleagues and stakeholders.

It is recommended that management should provide structured guidance and training programmes that help employees apply self-management skills appropriately within the organizational environment. Such programmes should emphasize balancing personal emotional control with collaborative work practices, timely decision-making, and effective communication with colleagues and supervisors.

It is recommended that organizational management should guide employees on the appropriate application of relationship management skills in the workplace. Training programmes and professional development initiatives should emphasize how employees can maintain healthy interpersonal relationships while still prioritizing task accomplishment and productivity.

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