

AKSU Journal of Social Sciences
(AKSUJOSS)
ISSN: 2504 – 933X
Vol.7,No.1 (April) 2026,pp.22-28
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61090/aksujoss.7.1.22-28
URL: htpp://www.aksujournal.com/vol.7.1
Received: January 11, 2026
Accepted: February 28, 2026
Published Online: March 11, 2026

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service

Cosmas A. Udom
Department of Social and Gender Statistics,
National Bureau of Statistics, Abuja, Nigeria.
cosmasequip@gmail.com

Ubong N. Umanah
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Evangel University, Akaeze, Ebonyi State, Nigeria
ubong.umanah@evangeluniversity.edu.ng

Kemfon O. Udom
Department of Business Administration and Management
Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Nigeria
kemfonsebastian@gmail.com

Brayi Job Kainga
University of Africa, Toru Orua, Bayelsa State
Brayikainga4@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is an examination of emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness in Akwa Ibom State civil service. Related literature was reviewed, and the transformational leadership theory was used as the theoretical framework. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. 390 respondents were sampled in the course of the study. Taro Yamane method was used to determine the sample size. Data generated from the field in this study was analyzed using simple percentages (%) and frequency tables. Findings from the study revealed that emotional intelligence influences leadership style and behaviour in the Akwa Ibom State civil service; it also reveals that emotionally intelligent leaders are committed to organizational goals and that emotional intelligence impacts the leader-employee relationship and the working environment. The study recommends that employers/leaders should monitor and manage the emotions of their subordinates by paying special attention to their achievement and development needs; employers should motivate their employees in a transactional method by a shared vision and openness and move towards the end of motivation by punishment. Leaders in organisations should be willing to learn from their employees and model behavior that they would like to see within their organization that is positive and productive. Leadership in different organisations should consider the benefits of open

communication among their employees, rather than a policy of secrecy and non-inclusiveness.

Keywords*:* Leadership, Emotional intelligence, Effectiveness, Employee perception.

Introduction

The twenty-first-century global geopolitical landscape is experiencing profound transformation, necessitating that organisations develop new paradigms to respond to rapid technological advancement and intensifying globalisation (Glaser, 2012). Traditional organisational models are increasingly inadequate for maintaining competitiveness in a connected global economy. As a result, organisations must embrace innovative leadership approaches that foster employee morale, productivity, and adaptability to attract investments and satisfy global market demands (Moore, 2013). Modern leadership emphasises the facilitation and orchestration of work behaviours over hierarchical control. While research has long focused on identifying traits

linked to leadership effectiveness, recent scholarship highlights social effectiveness, with emotional intelligence now seen as pivotal for effective leadership in complex settings.

Emotional intelligence is widely regarded as a vital element in leadership development (Sy & Cote, 2004). Introduced in the early 1990s, Goleman (1997) posited that emotional intelligence could surpass intelligence quotient in predicting success. Although empirical support for its direct efficacy remains mixed, emotional intelligence has gained legitimacy as a tool for identifying effective leaders (Palmer et al., 2001). Organisations value emotional intelligence for its role in enhancing employee satisfaction and engagement. As leadership evolves, employees are increasingly expected to self-manage, take accountability, and collaborate within teams, positioning work groups as essential operational units that function as micro-organisations within larger entities (Cohen & Bailey, 1997).

Despite substantial interest, consensus on the components of emotional intelligence remains elusive. Neuman, Wagner, and Christiansen (1999) noted a lack of research examining how group member selection and socialisation impact team-level emotional intelligence. Individual traits and skills are crucial in shaping emotional intelligence within groups. Leadership effectiveness is inherently interpersonal, requiring the capacity to influence others positively (Prabu, 2012). Effective leadership not only supports goal achievement but also enables personal and collective fulfilment. In contemporary organisations, sound business acumen provides strategic direction, while emotionally intelligent leadership transforms vision into tangible outcomes. Leaders deficient in emotional intelligence often misinterpret follower needs, undermining relationships and effectiveness (Gleeson, 2014). This study investigates these dynamics within the Akwa Ibom State civil service.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering effective leadership cannot be overstated; however, it remains increasingly deficient among leaders in both the private and public sectors. This deficiency not only undermines organisational productivity but also contributes significantly to increased labour turnover (Ekanem et al., 2021). While organisations adopt diverse leadership styles to motivate employees, emotionally intelligent individuals who are self-motivated tend to feel more secure in their capacity to manage and influence life events. The contemporary workplace is characterised by constant environmental demands and pressures, with individual behaviour shaped by a range of non-cognitive abilities, competencies, and skills. Consequently, organisational effectiveness largely depends on leaders' ability to apply emotional intelligence in influencing and motivating employees to achieve organisational goals.

Supporting this view, Prentice and King (2011) identify emotional intelligence as a strong predictor of employee service performance, noting that high-performing employees are more likely to remain longer within their organisations. Leaders who fail to connect with their own emotional and multiple intelligences, as well as those of their subordinates, negatively affect organisational structure, culture, morale, and employee retention. According to Lynn (2002), emotional intelligence represents the dimension of intelligence responsible for self-management, relationship management, and the regulation of internal emotions in response to external stimuli. Thus, emotionally intelligent leadership is central to fostering positive workplace relationships and sustaining organisational effectiveness.

The most direct impact of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness lies in its influence on organisational productivity, labour turnover, and employee well-being. Emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to create supportive environments that encourage employee commitment and long-term retention, thereby contributing to organisational growth and development. Conversely, a lack of emotional intelligence among leaders often results in

increased labour turnover, heightened workplace stress, and diminished staff well-being, ultimately impairing organisational performance. Previous studies (Anari, 2012; Barling, Slater and Kelloway, 2000; Jones, 2000) highlight emotional intelligence as a vital tool for enhancing employee satisfaction and retention. However, limited empirical research exists on emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness within the Akwa Ibom State civil service, particularly with respect to measuring key variables. This study therefore seeks to address this gap.

Research Questions

Arising from the problem statement, the following questions are pertinent:

1. What are the impacts of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness in Akwa Ibom State civil service?
2. What is the employee's perception of their leader's emotional intelligence?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include:

1. To examine the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness
2. To examine the employee's perception of their leader's emotional intelligence

Conceptual Clarification

Emotional Intelligence

Effective leadership is widely acknowledged as essential in today's dynamic organisational environments, with emotional intelligence (EI) increasingly recognised as a fundamental determinant (Weinberger, 2014). Salovey and Mayer (1990) conceptualise EI as a subset of social intelligence, encompassing the ability to monitor, discriminate, and utilise emotions to inform thought and behaviour. Emotional regulation, which involves restraining inappropriate emotional impulses, is central to EI (Thoits, 1989). Such regulation is shaped by social beliefs and expectations regarding emotional expression (Averill, 1980). Emotionally intelligent individuals exhibit self-awareness, sensitivity to social rules, and adaptability, enabling them to align their conduct with group and organisational norms. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) assert that EI is inseparable from organisational settings, where rationality often guides acceptable emotional expression. Core characteristics such as feedback utilisation, self-awareness, and self-regulation underpin emotionally intelligent leadership, enhancing group integration and organisational cohesion.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

Emotional intelligence has emerged as a pivotal factor in effective leadership, especially within team-based structures. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) contend that emotionally intelligent leaders elevate team performance by motivating members, building trust, and fostering positive interpersonal relationships. These leaders articulate a compelling vision, inspire commitment, and promote constructive engagement, resulting in enhanced team cohesion and outcomes. Four principal components underpin EI in leadership: accurate emotional appraisal and self-awareness (George, 2000); emotional knowledge for anticipating and managing responses; strategic use of emotions to influence cognition and behaviour, which facilitates creativity and decision-making (Staw et al., 1994; George, 2000); and effective emotion management to guide interpersonal processes. Goleman (1995) further highlights self-awareness, motivation, empathy, and emotional regulation as vital for relationship management. Strengthening EI capabilities in leaders therefore represents a strategic avenue for policymakers and organisations to improve leadership effectiveness and organisational performance.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership theory

Transformational leadership (TL) theory proposes that such leadership is commonly the product in a vast array of outcomes at the individual level (employee's empowerment, extra effort) and at the collective level (constituent cohesiveness, combined efficiency). TL produces these effects primarily by priming the followers' relational self and promoting identification with the leader (Kark and Shamir, 2002). What distinguishes a leader is the combination of head and heart, the ability to understand and effectively apply emotions as a means of connection and influence (that is the emotional intelligence that a leader possesses), (Kark and Shamir, 2002). The transformational leader perceives leadership as assisting people to develop a unified vision and then to engage the said vision until it manifests. The transformational leader educes that vision from the desires and objectives of others, provides it structure, and establishes it as an ambition to attempt. The vision is not the leader's, it is a shared vision that each person sees as his/her own (Gardner, 1993). Kark and Shamir (2002) suggested that transformational leaders can have a dual effect, exerting their influence on followers through the creation of personal identification with the leader and social identification with the work unit and that these different forms of identification can lead to differential outcomes.

Methods and Materials

This study adopts the descriptive survey research design owing to the need to work with information provided by research participants. The purposive sampling technique was used to select three hundred and ninety(390) respondents from three ministries; Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture using the Taro Yamane method of sample size determination. Data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaire and analysis by using simple percentages (%). The Chronbach (1951) Alpha Statistical test was used to test the reliability coefficient and the result showed 0.65% which indicates that there was high degree of internal consistency.

Results, Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1

What are the impacts of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness in Akwa Ibom State civil service?

Table 1: Opinions of respondent on the impacts of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness.

S/N	Questions	SA	A	D	SD
1	Does emotional intelligence promotes transformational leadership style?	200(51%)	150(38%)	30(7.6%)	10(2.5%)
2	Does transformational leadership impact positively on leader-employee team work relationship and work environment?	300(76%)	70(17%)	10(2.5%)	10(2.5%)
3	Does emotional intelligence enhances efficiency in organisations?	200(51%)	150(38%)	30(7.6%)	10(2.5%)

Source**:** Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness. The data reveal that a majority—200 respondents (51%) strongly agreed and 150 (38%) agreed—that emotional intelligence fosters transformational leadership style and behaviour, while a minority (7.6% disagreed, 2.5% strongly disagreed) held contrary views. Additionally, 300 participants (76%) strongly agreed and 70 (17%) agreed that emotional

intelligence positively affects leader-employee relationships and the work environment, whereas only a small proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed (2.5% each). Furthermore, over half of the respondents (51%) strongly agreed and 38% agreed that emotional intelligence enhances organisational efficiency, with minimal disagreement. These findings collectively suggest broad consensus among respondents that emotional intelligence significantly contributes to transformational leadership, positive workplace relationships, and organisational performance.

Research question 2

What are the employee's perception of their leader's emotional intelligence?

Table 2: Opinions of respondents on the perceptions of their leader's emotional intelligence.

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1	Emotionally intelligent leaders are empathetic	300(77%)	70(18%)	10(3%)	10(3%)
2	Emotionally intelligent leaders are committed to organizational goals	300(77%)	50(13%)	20(5%)	20(5%)
3	Emotional intelligence makes the leader possess transformational leadership style.	250(64%)	100(25%)	20(5%)	20(5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 summarises respondents' perceptions of their leaders' emotional intelligence. The majority, 300 respondents (77%), strongly agreed and 70 (18%) agreed that emotionally intelligent leaders demonstrate empathy, while only a minority (3% each) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 300 participants (77%) strongly agreed and 50 (13%) agreed that emotionally intelligent leaders display strong commitment to organisational goals, with just 5% each expressing disagreement or strong disagreement. Furthermore, 250 respondents (64%) strongly agreed and 100 (25%) agreed that emotional intelligence enables leaders to exhibit humanity and treat others fairly, compared to 5% who disagreed and 5% who strongly disagreed. These findings indicate a clear consensus that emotional intelligence in leadership is associated with empathy, organisational commitment, and fairness in interpersonal treatment.

Findings of the Study

Findings from the study reveal that emotional intelligence promotes transformational leadership style and behaviour in Akwa Ibom State civil service; it also reveal that transformational leadership style impact positively on leader-employee relationships and the work environment; emotional intelligence makes the leader possess the characteristics of human being and treat everyone fairly. This finding corroborates with the finding of Averill (1980); Ashforth & Humphrey (1995); Jones & George (1998). The study have established that emotionally intelligent leaders are empathetic. Findings from the study also reveal that emotionally intelligent leaders are committed to organizational goals. This findings corroborates with finding of Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee (2002); George (2002); Staw, Sutton & Pelled (1994).

Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence is a tool that organisations use in order to become more aware of the needs of the employee and also maintain a level of employee satisfaction and retention. Emotional Intelligence in leadership has shown positive social awareness and retention among employees, the relationship that is developed among the leaders and the employee lends to the overall culture and climate of the organization. Furthermore, the higher emotional intelligence levels were associated with higher leadership effectiveness. Additional research should be conducted in an effort for organisations to understand the impact that emotional intelligence has

on transforming organisations as well as the actual measures of understanding emotional intelligence in leadership and how it can be applied to the organization.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Employees should be properly trained on building a sustainable emotional intelligence in the organization to ensure efficiency and maximum productivity. Employers/leaders should monitor and manage the emotions of their subordinates by paying special attention to their achievement and development needs.
2. Employers should motivate their employees in a transactional method by a shared vision and openness and move towards the end of motivation by punishment. Transformational leadership style should be encouraged in organisations including Akwa Ibom State civil service.
3. Leadership of organisations should be willing to learn from their employees and model behavior that they would like to see within their organization that is positive and productive. In addition, this behavior should not foster anxiety of fear within the organization as that lends to a hostile working environment instead of a healthy working environment.

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