

Constructs of emotional intelligence and the performance of employees of registered eateries in an emerging economy

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on employee performance in fast food outlets in Delta State, Nigeria. The objectives were to examine the influence of self-control, self-awareness, and social competency on employees' performance. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire distributed to 146 participants working in various fast-food establishments. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics; Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to identify relationships between emotional intelligence components and employee performance. The findings indicate that self-control and self-awareness significantly correlate with improved employee performance, with mean scores reflecting a strong capacity to manage emotions and build positive workplace relationships. Conversely, challenges were noted in avoiding impulsive actions and adapting to diverse personalities, emphasizing the implications of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in improving operational efficiency within the fast-food industry. Based on these findings, the study recommends implementing targeted emotional intelligence training programs to enhance employees' self-control, self-awareness, and social competency, and establishing mentorship programs to guide employees in emotional regulation and team dynamics. Additionally, fostering a supportive work environment that encourages open communication and feedback is essential, among others. The study emphasizes the importance of EI as a key driver of employee performance and organizational success.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Employee performance, Self-awareness, Self-control, Social competency.

1. Introduction

The world of business today is facing tremendous changes. These changes are as a result the introduction of artificial intelligence, competition, and globalization. For companies to perform outstandingly, employees are expected to do the right thing by being absorbed in their work, not only bodily but also passionately and psychologically. Stability is required for firms to perform excellently. [1]. EL is an evolving concept that is gaining ground and managers of firms are trying to understand what it means.

EI has come to stay. Organizations that will be successful in our century and beyond will be those that apply this concept in their business. Organizations that will apply EI in their operations will make decisions speedily, act professionally, and touch the minds and hearts of their clients in such a way that will motivate them positively. This paradigm shift will definitely, put organizations on the edge of the shock wave of change that may change the old way of running businesses globally.

A 21st-century challenge for managers is how to manage employee emotions. Although previous research recognized a linkage between EI and performance in the organization [2-4] for other researchers, the opposite is the case. To them, EL does not affect performance [5, 6]. In Delta State, little evidence is known about how employee workers translate their EI into improved work outcomes in the fast-food outlet in Delta State, Nigeria. In a workplace where people are constantly afraid and insecure,

employees are at risk of turning “numb” to protect themselves. This is seen in the black faces of some staff, the lack of enthusiasm by front-line workers, and the remarkably receptive ways managers and employees treat each other. The very mechanism that allows a person to survive an emotionally painful environment also makes it difficult for them to respond sensitively and empathetically toward others.

Some employees in fast-food outlets seem not to be socially aware of the emotions and concerns of others, they do not know what is socially acceptable from them in society and how they should act in that manner. The study examines the impact of EI on employee performance in fast food outlets in Delta State, Nigeria.

Fast food outlets were chosen because employees in this sector in Delta State, Nigeria, mostly work in teams and interact with different kinds of clients daily. This will allow for a proper assessment of their EI while working with co-workers and interacting with clients.

The main objective of this study is to identify the impact of EI on employee performance in fast food outlets in Delta State Nigeria. The specific objectives are: to Investigate the impact of self-control on employee performance, to examine the impact of self-awareness on employee performance and to examine the impact of social competency on employee performance.

Business operations do not operate on their own, instead, individuals with feelings or emotions, culture, and needs constitute the foundation of any organization. Organisations may have the latest technology but when the human capital is not there, they become functionless. Human capital is a driver of organizational success. This is why understanding the concept of EI by managers or operators of fast food outlets and even employees cannot be overemphasized. Emotions are guiding forces that help humans in facing predicaments and tasks that one's intelligence alone cannot handle [7]. It is a truism that, for better or for worse intelligence can come to nothing when emotions hold sway. This means that when an employee's emotional state such as anger or excitement controls the individual, intelligence has no place in the life of the employee, which means that employees need to act or lead based on their EI as this will help guide their inactions and reactions to situations and people.

EI demonstrates the ability to know and understand emotion in ourselves and others and to have better and more efficient relations between two parties. According, to Bahdor, et al. [8] EI consists of major characteristics like emotional awareness motivation, capacity to manage anger, intuition, and emotional response to other emotions and reactions. These competencies involved a meaningful set of values. For Gareth, et al. [9] EI is the ability to understand and manage one's moods and emotions and the moods and emotions of others. Goleman [10] took EI to another level by making it more popular in the workplace by describing it as an important ingredient of a successful business career and as a crucial component for effective group performance. According to the psychologist, EI is more significant in terms of understanding individuals than general intelligence. For Mayer and Salovey [11] EI initially is a form of intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one thinking and action. However, these authors later changed their view of (EI and described emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive emotion to promote personal growth. To them, EI involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion, the ability to access and generate feelings, and the ability to understand emotion to promote emotional and intellectual growth. EI is the ability of people to understand and manage their feelings and emotions, as well as their emotions toward other individuals, events, and objects [12].

These authors provided a model which comprises four abilities—perception, assimilation, understanding, and regulation of emotion, (Emotional management). Emotion perception also includes the ability to distinguish between honest and dishonest expressions of emotions, the assimilation of emotion is the ability to generate use and feel emotion as a necessary tool to communicate feelings or to use them in another cognitive process. Where these characteristics are in shortfall, products and services delivered to clients are negatively affected leading to a reduction in revenue and it will also hurt the performance of employees [13]. There is to date no widely accepted test to gauge a person's EI. There is a need for more psychometrically sound research before a widely accepted measure is adopted by managers [12]. What we know now is high and low EI are only starting point of understanding the concept. An

employee with high EI can control and manage his or her emotions, while an individual with low emotional intelligence finds it difficult to control his or her emotions.

There are several measures of EI. One of them is self-control. Self-control is one of the measures of EI. Self-control refers to how well we control our emotions, impulses, and resources. It includes self-management, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, achievement drive, and initiative. The role of self-control is to understand different kinds of emotion and control impulse action which is more fit for a given situation. Emotional self-control involves dealing well with stress and controlling emotional moods or outbursts without resulting in conflicts [8]. Self-control entails understanding oneself and the ability to control one's emotions no matter the circumstances a person finds himself. Self-control is very fundamental in the workplace where people from various backgrounds, likes, and dislikes converge. This is the essence of emotional intelligence.

Another measure of EI is self-awareness. Self-awareness is the most crucial competency associated with workplace EI. Self-awareness is an understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses, and emotions. People with strong self-awareness are neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful. The reverse is the case with those with weak self-awareness. Employees with strong self-awareness are honest with themselves and others, they also recognize how their feelings affect themselves, other people or employees, and their job performance [14].

Self-awareness enables us to be more effective and form outstanding relationships in the workplace. Self-awareness is the ability for one to recognize his/her emotion and their effect on others. Studies suggest that people who are aware of their emotions are more effective in their jobs, they recognize and understand few moods, and can perceive and anticipate how their actions affect others [14, 15].

Social competency is another measure of EI. It has to do with finding common ground to establish rapport with others minimize conflict, persuade, and have positive relationships with others. Social Competence is popularly understood as —being able to be with other people. It involves the ability to establish, maintain, and develop social relationships with other people, in working contexts and own life. Social competency is not a single attribute, rather it is a constellation of knowledge, skills, and emotional responses, all of which interact differently in many situations the individual is in Surendra, et al. [16]. These three measures of EI are all related. An employee with strong self-control, self-awareness, and social competency is likely to work well with others, which can lead to improved productivity.

The importance of EI in the workplace cannot be overemphasized. Studies have shown that people with higher levels of EI have higher self-confidence, more concentration, and more success in their jobs. They are also more effective in their leadership style and have a greater impact on their staff to motivate them and they are healthier [17].

Studies have also shown that EI could bring commitment, loyalty, and trust between staff in an organization which would cause higher productivity and effectiveness among teams [17]. EI is also one of the most important forecasters of organizational success. Martinez [18] mentioned that people's success factor in their Job performance is just 20 percent intelligence and around 80 percent depends on the level of EI. Again, Dulewicz and Higgs [19] mentioned that improvement in individual performance is strongly related to individual EI. Moreover, they also acknowledge the direct relationship between organizational performance and individual performance with individual EI.

Nowadays people especially in the workplace are evaluated by new criteria, not only with the years of experience or how much training they have had, or their college shining grades, but they also assess the quality of handling, and relations between themselves and others [20]. Maintaining a cordial relationship with staff and customers in an organization is one of the essential ingredients for improving performance. This is because Employee performance is directly related to organizational productivity and its success.

This work is anchored on Affective Events Theory. The theory begins by recognizing that emotions are a response to an event in the work environment. The work environment includes everything surrounding the job. This environment creates work events that can be hassles, uplifts, or both. Examples of hassles are colleagues who are stubborn or who refuse to carry out their share of work and conflicting directions from different managers. Examples of uplifting events include meeting a goal, getting support

from a colleague, and receiving recognition for an accomplishment [21]. These different work events trigger positive or negative reactions.

This theory offers two important messages. First emotions provide valuable insight into understanding employee behaviour. The theory explains how workplace hassles and uplifts influence employee performance and satisfaction. Second, emotions accumulate, employees and managers should therefore not ignore emotions and the events that cause them when they appear to be minor [22].

Affective Events theory is of importance to the study because it will assist managers and employees in understanding the events that can trigger positive or negative reactions in the workplace.

2. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the impact of EI on employee performance in fast food outlets in Delta State, Nigeria. A quantitative approach was chosen, and data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to employees across various outlets. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select fast food employees, as they were directly relevant to understanding EI in a customer service-intensive environment. Out of a target population of approximately 200 outlets, a sample size of 150 was determined to ensure representativeness. The primary data collection instrument was a questionnaire with Likert-scale questions to measure the variables of interest: self-control, self-awareness, social competency, and employee performance. These variables were operationalized into measurable items in alignment with established scales from prior EI research to ensure content validity.

Data analysis procedures involved descriptive statistics to summarize demographic details and inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and regression analysis, to examine relationships between EI components and employee performance. Ethical considerations were strictly observed: participants gave informed consent, anonymity was maintained, and data were used solely for academic purposes. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive and ethical examination of the research objectives.

Table 1.
Summary of Demographic Data.

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	62	42.5
Female	84	57.5
Subtotal	146	100
Age Group		
18-24	45	30.8
25-34	67	45.9
35-44	26	17.8
45 and above	8	5.5
Subtotal	146	100
Job Role		
Cashier	50	34.2
Cook	40	27.4
Wait staff	36	24.7
Manager	20	13.7
Subtotal	146	100

3. Result

The demographic data in Table 1, collected from the 146 participants in the study provided a comprehensive overview of the workforce in fast food outlets in Delta State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 62 males (42.5%) and 84 females (57.5%), reflecting a relatively balanced gender representation. Participants were predominantly young, with the majority (73%) aged between 18 and 34 years.

Specifically, 45 individuals (30.8%) fell into the 18-24 age group, while 67 participants (45.9%) were aged 25-34. Only 26 participants (17.8%) were between 35 and 44, and a mere 8 (5.5%) were 45 years and older. The distribution of job roles revealed that 50 participants (34.2%) were cashiers, 40 (27.4%) were cooks, 36 (24.7%) were wait staff, and 20 (13.7%) held managerial positions.

Table 2.
Presentation of Research Questions.

Objective	Research Question	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Objective 1: Investigate the impact of self-control on employee performance.	RQ1: I manage my emotions during stressful situations at work.	4.1	0.75
	RQ2: I stay calm when dealing with challenging customers.	3.9	0.8
	RQ3: I avoid impulsive actions under stress.	2.9	0.7
	RQ4: My ability to control my emotions enhances my work performance.	4.6	0.65
Objective 2: Examine the impact of self-awareness on employee performance.	RQ5: I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses in my job role.	3.7	0.85
	RQ6: I reflect on how my emotions affect my work.	3.8	0.9
	RQ7: I seek feedback to improve my performance.	4.1	0.75
	RQ8: My self-awareness helps me perform my duties effectively.	4.2	0.6
Objective 3: Examine the impact of social competency on employee performance.	RQ9: I build positive relationships with my colleagues.	4.1	0.55
	RQ10: I resolve conflicts effectively with team members.	3.9	0.7
	RQ11: I feel comfortable working with different personalities.	3.2	0.65
	RQ12: My social skills contribute positively to my performance.	4.4	0.6

From Table 2, The data from the study on EI and employee performance were summarized effectively through mean scores and standard deviations across three key objectives. For Objective 1, focusing on self-control, participants reported a mean score of 4.1 for managing emotions in stressful situations, indicating a generally positive perception. However, the mean score of 2.9 for avoiding impulsive actions under stress suggests a potential area for improvement. Notably, participants felt strongly that their ability to control emotions enhances work performance, with a mean score of 4.6.

In examining Objective 2, self-awareness, participants rated their awareness of strengths and weaknesses with a mean score of 3.7. Reflecting on emotional impact yielded a slightly higher score of 3.8, while seeking feedback for performance improvement averaged 4.1. The highest score in this objective was 4.2, affirming that self-awareness aids in performing duties effectively.

Finally, for Objective 3, related to social competency, the mean score of 4.1 for building positive relationships with colleagues reflects strong interpersonal skills. However, the lower score of 3.2 for comfort in working with diverse personalities indicates a need for development in this area. Overall, these findings underscore the significant role EI plays in enhancing employee performance within fast food outlets, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for targeted training and development

4. Discussion

From the demographic information, the youthfulness of the workforce suggests that employees may be more adaptable to training programs aimed at enhancing EI, which could, in turn, improve performance in high-stress environments like fast food outlets. The higher representation of females aligns with trends in the service industry, where women often occupy frontline positions. This demographic profile indicates a potential opportunity for targeted interventions focusing on developing self-awareness, self-control, and

social competency, particularly among younger employees. Understanding these characteristics is vital for implementing effective management strategies that enhance employee performance and overall service quality in the fast-food sector.

The results from the correlation and regression analysis revealed significant positive correlations between each EI component and employee performance. Social competency had the strongest correlation ($r = 0.78, p < 0.01$), indicating its critical role in enhancing employee interactions in fast food outlets. Self-awareness also contributed substantially ($r = 0.72, p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees who understand their emotions perform better. Self-control ($r = 0.65, p < 0.01$) demonstrated a noteworthy impact, highlighting the importance of emotional management in customer service. These findings underscore EI as a key predictor of effective employee performance in fast-food settings.

The findings of this study align with the empirical reviews of Olise [14] and Atuma and Agwu [23] emphasizing the importance of EI in enhancing employee performance. The positive correlation observed between self-control, self-awareness, and social competency in this study mirrors the results from Olise [14] who found a significant relationship between EI components and job performance.

However, while Atuma and Agwu [23] identified three competencies significantly related to return on investment, our study highlighted a broader spectrum of emotional intelligence's impact on performance without directly linking it to financial outcomes. This discrepancy may arise from differences in industry context—banking versus fast food—and the specific competencies assessed. The implications suggest that organizations should prioritize EI training for employees to improve not only job performance but also overall operational efficiency, as evidenced by the consistent findings across studies.

5. Conclusion

This study on the Impact of EI on Employee Performance in Fast Food Outlets in Delta State, Nigeria investigated the influence of self-control, self-awareness, and social competency on employee performance. Key findings revealed that employees demonstrated a strong ability to manage their emotions and build positive relationships, with self-control and self-awareness showing significant positive correlations with performance outcomes. However, challenges were identified in avoiding impulsive actions and in working with diverse personalities. Based on these findings, several recommendations were made:

Management of fast food outlet should provide EI training programs to enhance employees' self-control, self-awareness, and social competency.

Fostering a supportive work environment that encourages open communication and feedback is a prerequisite for organizational success.

Conducting regular workshops focused on developing interpersonal skills and conflict resolution strategies should be encouraged.

Establishing mentorship programs to guide employees in emotional regulation and team dynamics is of essence.

Management should evaluate the impact of EI initiatives on overall employee performance to ensure continuous improvement and adaptation.

Abbreviations:

EI: Emotional Intelligence.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Author Contributions:

Edewhor Vincent: Conceptualization and Writing, Eruteya and Ejiro: Methodology and Supervision.

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