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Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Performance of Employees in Tertiary Institutions: The Mediating Role of Work Motivation

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is an important concept in organisational psychology that plays a significant role in the performance of employees. Despite this, empirical investigation on the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance is under-researched. Hence, this study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and job

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performance with the introduction of work motivation as a mediating variable. The descriptive survey involved a heterogeneous sample of 370 non-academic staff from selected tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The relationship between EI and performance was tested using multiple linear regression, while the mediation model was analysed through the Hayes bootstrapping method in SPSS version 25. Findings from the study suggested self-emotion appraisal and regulation of emotion as statistically significant predictors of job performance. Work motivation was found to partially mediate the relationship between EI and job performance among the sample.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence; job performance; employee performance; work motivation; Hayes mediation; intrinsic motivation; extrinsic motivation.*

JEL Classification: M1, M5, L2

1. INTRODUCTION

An ideal workplace is practically a social environment where employees from different backgrounds interact in the course of carrying out corporate duties towards the realisation of organisational objectives. To achieve the purpose of their coming together, some level of understanding and a degree of tolerance must be at play. However, human behaviour differs from one person to another, and this poses big challenges to the optimisation of interpersonal relations in the social environment [64]. This is why emotional intelligence (EI) is an essential dimension in the context of organisational behaviour, especially when improving job performance (JP) is the focus.

In this present age, emotional intelligence skills may not be sufficient to maximise employee productivity and actualize organisational goals. This is because human beings are naturally defiant to routine tasks that contravene personal comfort unless extra benefits are attached [1, 37]. Moreover, work motivation is vital to the performance enhancement of employees because it boosts morale and healthy interpersonal relations, providing unexplained enthusiasm that alters the emotional ambience in the workplace [63, 72]. Hence, the importance of work motivation (WM) cannot be overemphasised if EI were to be enhanced for staff efficiency.

Several studies have been conducted on EI and JP, though with contradictory findings [34, 46, 66, 79]. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of empirical investigation into the mediating role of WM in the relationship between EI and JP. To the best of our knowledge, only three studies have examined the mediating effect of WM on the relationship between EI and JP [22,38,51]. While

the three study samples were too small (less than 100 respondents), [51 and 22] adopted the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI), which assesses motivation only through self-induced factors.

Owing to the profound level of diversity in the Nigerian workplace, there is need to incorporate large and diversified sample for the study of work motivation to achieve generalizable results. The Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) is more appropriate for measuring the WM construct in Nigeria as several factors external to the job determine degree of motivation. The current study thus addresses these gaps by investigating relations between EI and JP with a focus on the mediating role of WM using the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale on the heterogeneous sample through the Hayes bootstrap method.

1.1 Emotional Intelligence

The study of emotional intelligence (EI) was literally of limited reference in behavioural sciences until popularised by [12] in his best-selling book "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ." Ever since, the relevance of EI to the improvement of human activities and performance within social settings has been vehemently researched by scholars of organisational behaviour [64]. The concept of EI as conceived by organisational psychologists [6] was aimed at determining the intra-personal attributes of individuals and the interpersonal abilities they display within a group to be able to appropriately delegate responsibilities [53,79].

The study of EI in the workplace has, for decades, taken centre stage, with many authors giving different definitions of the concept. [39] defined EI 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 actions. [14] described EI as an act of "managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately, therefore enabling people to work together towards common goals in a constructive and transparent environment." EI is also defined as the ability or capacity of an individual to reason about emotions to enhance human thinking [39]. For this investigation, we define EI as a state of mind characterised by the ability to identify and control default sentiment in oneself to bring out the best in others and achieve set goals.

1.2 Work Motivation

Work motivation (WM) is described as a psychological activity typified by enthusiasm that drives employees to subdue constraints and accomplish personal and corporate objectives [70,72]. It is an important element of organisational psychology that is used to facilitate employee productivity and firm performance. WM is simply the voluntary manifestation of enthusiastic stimuli to work, either as a result of self-induced or environmental forces. Other sources depict WM as an inner impulse that drives an individual to work towards set objectives based on their essential needs [35,45].

Pinder et al. [54] defined WM as a collection of both internal and external forces working on an individual to influence commitment to tasks and other conduct associated with work delivery. Broadly speaking, motivation can be categorised as intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to those psychological incentives achieved by employees as compensation for a job well done [36,72]. Intrinsic motivation may be self-generated energy, such as the sense of fulfilment and satisfaction an individual experiences after successful completion of a task [62]. Other examples include respect, career growth, accomplishment, skill acquisition, and the freedom to apply discretion [1,2,42].

In contrast, extrinsic motivation implies those noticeable rewards driven by external factors [2,31]. In this case, the job is incapable of driving motivation in itself but rather functions as a means to an end in that it provides monetary (or non-monetary) compensation that fulfils the pressing needs of the employee [1]. Extrinsic factors that motivate employees include wages, fringe benefits, work environment, compensation package, security, and promotion [11,63,72].

1.3 Job Performance

Job performance (JP) is a universal concept of employee assessment that has attracted diverse definitions from scholars. [61] defined the concept as a set of work-related actions carried out by employees to meet personal or group targets and fulfil organisational goals. JP is perceived as an entirely individual phenomenon that is highly influenced by various internal (e.g., competence) and external (e.g., motivation) factors [75]. Performance can, in another context, be considered the capability of a worker to proficiently attain time-bound objectives and achieve expected job-related results commensurate with associated compensation [5,48].

Different yardsticks are used to measure employee performance in the workplace. Evidence from extant literature suggests that performance can be measured by quantity, quality, work precision, efficiency, work standard, work ethics, task accomplishment, etc. [57]. [30] argued that JP can be assessed by the rate of task completion (such as meeting sales targets), customer relationship management (ability to satisfy existing clients and win potential markets), and the quality of the feedback system. Another scholar claimed that performance is best determined by time management attributes, customer relationship management, interpersonal relations with co-workers, self-confidence, and feedback from superiors [23].

1.4 Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

Recent studies view EI as a concept examining the thoughts and feelings of humans when they coexist within a social environment and have critically examined how this relates to the level of performance of individuals [46,66]. [52] conducted research among workers in the food and beverage industry and discovered EI to positively impact the performance of the sample. The authors clarified that the development of social skills amplifies acceptance among co-workers, thereby creating a collaborative environment that influences performance. The contrary opinion was, however, suggested by [34], who found no evidence of a relationship between social awareness and the performance of sampled employees of tertiary institutions.

Naz et al. [44] further presented evidence to support the theory that employees with higher EI

display professionalism in interpersonal relations, stress management, activity scheduling, and leadership acumen, which ultimately enhances their performance in a team. This implies that interpersonal skills and adaptability are crucial abilities that help employees perform optimally either solely or within a group [4,8,33]. [25] opined that EI plays an even more important role at the managerial level as a demonstration of a high level of self-emotion management by a leader engenders a productive workplace characterised by selfless relations that motivate individuals to deliver at their best. Suffice it to say that optimal utilisation of human psychological energy and emotional strength not only enhances specialisation but also improves the performance of an individual employee within the organisation [7,24,41,56]. The current study supports the argument that EI facilitates better performance when employees prioritise self-appraisal and regulation of emotion. Especially in service-oriented organisations as those sampled in this study, employee performance is a function of the quality of interpersonal relationships which is determined by how well individuals in the workplace manage their emotions.

According to the balance theory propounded by [19], stability of emotion in the workplace is a priority for improved interpersonal relations and employee performance. The theory posits that people's attitudes towards one another are subject to change from time to time, even as a balance of interpersonal relations in the workplace is essential. This behavioural change is caused by tension resulting from a perceived imbalance in interpersonal relations between people, which forces one to alter his or her sentiment towards balance formation [21]. Balance theory thus highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in creating a healthy workplace and a motivated workforce for enhanced JP. Based on these submissions, we intend to test the following hypothesis:

H1: *Emotional intelligence is positively related to job performance.*

1.5 Work Motivation, EI, and Job Performance

Various scholars have used different variables to mediate the relationship between EI and JP, with popular ones including job satisfaction [32,43,44,73] and organisational commitment [3,52,59]. However, there is insufficient study into the mediating role of WM in the EI and JP

relationship. [38] examined the mediating effect of WM on the relationship between EI and the performance of a sample of 100 government officials in Indonesia. The authors discovered that providing employees with basic needs (WM) positively influenced their state of emotion and performance. Similar research by [22] concluded that WM partially mediates the effect of EI on the performance of employees in the General Election Commission (KPU) Office.

Meanwhile, the study of [51] on 60 employees of a state-owned venture in the maritime sector of Medan City indicated that WM does not impact the relationship between EI and performance. Nevertheless, a basic understanding of human psychology indicates that extrinsic motivation such as a positive work environment, amiable co-worker relationships, and fairness in the reward system amplifies the emotional well-being of the employee [29,36]. In turn, when an employee is high on EI as a result of enthusiasm generated by work-related rewards, there is a high tendency for increased productivity for the individual and the team he or she belongs to [63].

The current argument is further supported by the affective events theory (AET) [74], which proves that positive emotions emanate from several driving forces within an individual or the work environment. These positive emotions, triggered by motivating factors, exert an equally positive effect on the subject's performance. This implies that positive EI is associated with an increase in the internal and external motivation of the employee, which in turn enhances JP. These events play out because when an employee enjoys good working relations with colleagues and superiors, his productivity tends to increase with an attendant aura of self-confidence and self-belonging [50,67]. Based on the evidence above, this study hypothesises that:

H2: *Work motivation mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance.*

2. METHODS

2.1 Participants

The population for this study consisted of non-academic staff of select higher institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. For even and fair representation, institutions were purposefully selected from the various tiers based on size, age, staff strength,

and population. This sampling method was considered because it provides a true representation of the population based on specific characteristics. From the foregoing, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, represented federal institutions; Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, represented state institutions; Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, represented private institutions; and Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, represented polytechnics. The total population consists of 4925 non-teaching staff from the four tertiary institutions, including Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (N = 1820); Ekiti State University (N = 1650); Afe Babalola University (N = 555); and Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti (N = 900).

The study sample was computed from the population of each institution using the [77] formula because of its reputation for drawing reliable samples without bias. Based on the recommendation of [65], samples for empirical analysis must not be less than 10 folds of the total study variables. Since we are investigating 3 variables, the minimum sample would be 30. A total of three hundred and seventy (370) respondents sampled from the overall study population is therefore adequate to assess the hypotheses. To arrive at the sample to be taken from each institution, the computation was done using a simple proportion formula and stratified sampling technique. Therefore, 137 respondents were selected from Federal University, Oye-Ekiti; 124 from Ekiti State University; 42 from Afe Babalola University; and 67 from Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti. Out of 370 questionnaires administered to the respondents, 357 were returned, indicating a 96% return rate, and 351 were considered valid for analysis purposes.

Participants in the survey were mostly from the registry (35%) and the bursary (25.9%). Others were from physical planning (18.2%), security (8.3%), audit (6.3%), pension (4.3%), and the library department (2.0%). The majority of the respondents have been on the job for more than 13 years (27.4%) or between 10 and 12 years (25.4%). Only 4% of the employees have less than 3 years of experience. Most of them were married (74.9%) and had bachelor's degrees (65.2%). There were more males (51.6%) than females (48.4%) in the sample.

2.2 Measures of Variables

2.2.1 Emotional intelligence

The measurement scales for the questionnaire were adapted from previous literature. The Wong

and Law's Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), which comprises 16 items with 4 dimensions, including self-emotion appraisal, others-emotion appraisal, use of emotions, and regulation of emotions, was adopted from the work of [76]. The five-point Likert scale (rated from 1–5) was formatted such that the lowest point denoted "strongly disagree," while the highest point on the scale corresponded to "strongly agree." Sample items from the self-reported scale include: "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time" (self-emotion appraisal); "I am a good observer of other people's emotions" (others-emotion appraisal); "I always tell myself I am a competent person" (use of emotion); and "I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions" (regulation of emotions). In a related study, [58] reported the reliability coefficient of WLEIS as 0.87 for all constructs. The Cronbach's alpha for EI in this present study was .79, which is conveniently above the acceptable threshold [10,16,20].

2.2.2 Job performance

Job performance was measured using the self-assessed Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) [27]. The scale consists of 18 items measuring three dimensions of JP: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive behaviours. The self-report scale is considered by researchers a valid and reliable measure of JP due to its simplicity, relationship with other JP variables, and generic scope [9,28,40,60]. In the IWPQ, 5 items measure task performance, 8 items assess contextual performance, and the counterproductive behaviour scale contains 5 items. The 5-point Likert scale was rated 1–5, with 1 indicating "seldom" and 5 representing "always." Sample items include: "I kept in mind the work result I needed to achieve" (task performance); "On my initiative, I started new tasks when my old tasks were completed" (contextual performance); and "I made problems at work bigger than they were" (counterproductive work behaviour). [28] report the Cronbach's alpha for the three scales of IWPQ as .79, .83, and .89 for task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour, respectively. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the adapted scale of IWPQ was found to be [72].

2.2.3 Work motivation

Motivation was measured using the Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS)

[71]. The 18-item scale consists of six subscales bearing three items each. The dimensions in the WEIMS include integrated regulation, amotivation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, external regulation, and intrinsic motivation. In this study, the scales were rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing 'does not correspond at all' and 5 indicating 'corresponds exactly'. The dimensions of WEIMS reflect significant reliability ranging from .70 to .83 except for identified regulation ($\alpha = .67$) and amotivation ($\alpha = .64$), which fell below the acceptable threshold [71]. Sample items on the subscales in response to the question "Why do you do your work?" include: "Because I derive much pleasure from learning new things" (intrinsic motivation); "Because it has become a fundamental part of who I am" (integrated regulation); "Because I chose this type of work to attain my career goals" (identified regulation); "Because I want to succeed at this job; if not, I would be very ashamed of myself" (introjected regulation); "Because it allows me to earn money" (external regulation); and "I don't know why we are provided with unrealistic working conditions" (motivation). Cronbach's alpha for WEIMS in the present study was found to be .81.

2.3 Procedure

The first and second authors visited the selected institutions to obtain the necessary approvals for the survey. After this, potential participants were met and briefed on the purpose of the study. The briefing was aimed at acquainting them with the technicalities of filling out the questionnaire but not to describe the variables in detail. This was done to limit the possibility of insincerity in the supplied data. The briefing and administration of the questionnaire took two months.

The respondents were followed up to assist with issues in completing the research instrument. Retrieval of the completed questionnaire took the authors another two months due to the busy schedules of participants.

After the collation of the retrieved questionnaires, data coding and cleaning were carried out on a spreadsheet. The data was then entered into SPSS, after which preliminary tests were conducted to ensure compliance with the necessary assumptions. Normality in the data distribution was statistically tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test in SPSS. Data were normally distributed on all scales. Compliance with the autocorrelation assumption was also carried out using the Durbin-Watson test.

2.4 Analytical Approach

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the study data. Descriptive statistics employed include the mean and standard deviation of the respondent's demographics. Inferential statistics involved correlation, multiple linear regression, and mediation analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 for Windows and the Process macro extension by Andrew F. Hayes.

In a bid to predict the relationship between EI and JP (H1), a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. To investigate the mediating role of WM on the relationship between EI and JP (H2), mediation analysis was conducted in SPSS 25 using the Process macro 4.2 extension [18], with bootstrapping calibration of 5,000 and bias correction of 95 percent confidence level for indirect effects.

2.5 Common Method Bias (CMB)

There is a high tendency for common method variance (CMV) in a situation where key variable data is collected from the same respondents using a self-report research instrument [55]. To ascertain the state of the data used for analysis, we used the Harman single-factor test in SPSS to estimate common method bias. The percentage of variance was 8.998, indicating the absence of CMB as the output was less than the 50% acceptable threshold [17,55].

3. RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and reliability results for the scales and subscales. The reliability coefficients for the three primary scales (EI, WM, and JP) were reasonably above the standard threshold [20,49]. The subscales across all variables also showed high Cronbach alpha coefficients except the contextual performance subscale ($\alpha = .62$). Table 1 also shows the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the scales.

The mean, which depicts the average value of the observed responses [68], on the Likert scale questionnaire indicates that most of the responses tilt towards the positive (higher) end of the scale, except for counterproductive behaviour, where the mean value was lower.

This implies that an average number of respondents to the questionnaire items on the dimensions of EI, WM, and JP, at least, agreed with the statements. Standard deviation is a measure of the extent to which points in a distribution deviate from their mean value, expressing the degree of variability and how spread out the data are [13,47]. All values of the standard deviation were observed to be less than 1.00, indicating that the data points of the variable items were well spread away from the mean. The highest standard deviation from the subscales was from integrated regulation (SD = .812, M = 3.82), while the least was from contextual performance (SD = .231, M = 4.29).

From Table 2, which presents the correlation matrix of the constructs, there was a positive, moderate, and significant correlation between the JP and EI scales ($r = .341, p < .01$). Subscales of EI such as self-emotion appraisal ($r = .179, p < .01$), others emotion appraisal ($r = .105, p < .05$), and use of emotion ($r = .232, p < .01$) were found to exhibit a positive but weakly significant correlation with JP, while regulation of emotions ($r = .388, p < .01$) showed a positive, moderate, and significant correlation with the outcome variable. On the other hand, no significant correlation was found between the JP and WM scales. However, WM showed a positive, moderate, and significant correlation with EI ($r = .412, p < .01$), while intrinsic motivation ($r = .217, p < .01$), integrated regulation ($r = .238, p < .01$), identified regulation ($r = .397, p < .01$), and introjection regulation ($r = .472, p < .01$) subscales also manifested good correlation.

3.2 Testing of Hypotheses

3.2.1 Regression analysis (Hypothesis 1)

The first hypothesis (H1) of this study proposed that emotional intelligence is positively related to job performance among employees of tertiary institutions. Results from statistical analysis in Table 3 show the Durbin-Watson test value ($d = 1.554$), which fits within the generally acceptable range of 1.5 and 2.5, indicating the absence of autocorrelation among the variables [15]. Furthermore, the multicollinearity diagnostic test revealed that the variables were moderately correlated, as evident in the variance inflation

factor (VIF) output of less than 10.0 and variable tolerance exceeding the acceptable minimum value of 0.10 [10,69].

The model summary of the regression analysis with $R = 0.408$ showed a positive linear relationship between the outcome and predictor variables. The R^2 value of 0.167 signified that EI explained a 16.7% variance in JP, while 83.3% of the changes were accounted for by other extraneous dimensions outside the scope of the model. The results revealed that only self-emotion appraisal ($B = 0.055; p = .027$) and regulation of emotions ($B = 0.179; p = .023$) were statistically significant among all four constructs of EI. Though both dimensions showed a direct and positive relationship with JP, the use of emotion was a more significant predictor and also exerted a higher effect on the dependent variable. From the model fit information ($F_{4,346} = 17.29, p < .0001$), it could be inferred that there was a significant effect of EI on JP. Thus, it was justified to accept the stated hypothesis.

3.2.2 Mediation analysis (Hypothesis 2)

To test the second hypothesis (H2), a bootstrapping technique was performed through the SPSS Process macro to investigate whether work motivation mediates the relationship between EI and JP. First, the output of the regression analysis revealed that EI (predictor variable) has a statistically significant effect on WM ($b = .517, t = 8.44, p < .001$). Next, while controlling for WM (mediator), the output of the second regression analysis indicated that EI was a significant predictor of JP, the dependent variable ($b = -.064, t = -2.39, p < .05$). The computed values of the indirect effect, which were based on 5000 bootstrap samples, revealed a statistically significant indirect negative relationship between EI and JP as mediated by WM ($a*b = -.033$, Bootstrap $CI_{95} = -.06$ and $-.01$). From the results, WM was responsible for about 16% of the total effect on JP. Additionally, the results indicate a statistically significant direct effect between EI and JP ($b = .24, t = 7.19, p < .001$). From the mediation results in Table 3, it was deduced that WM partially mediated the relationship between EI and JP. The structural model depicting the mediation path is represented in Fig. 2.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability test (N = 351)

Scales/Subscales	Items	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Intrinsic Motivation	3	4.03	.529	.798
Integrated Regulation	3	3.82	.812	.780
Identified Regulation	3	4.13	.610	.795
Introjected Regulation	3	4.23	.477	.794
External Regulation	3	3.98	.675	.805
Amotivation	3	3.99	.358	.808
WEIMS Overall	18	96.69	7.725	.808
Self-Emotion Appraisal	4	4.19	.339	.782
Others Emotion Appraisal	4	4.12	.416	.777
Use of Emotion	4	4.23	.326	.776
Regulation of Emotion	4	3.87	.436	.771
WLEIS Overall	16	82.07	5.169	.795
Task Performance	5	4.40	.281	.722
Contextual Performance	8	4.29	.231	.618
Counterproductive Behaviour	5	1.55	.294	.726
IWPQ Overall	18	74.26	3.309	.719

Source: SPSS Statistical Analysis Output (2023)

Note: WEIMS = Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale; WLEIS = Wong and Law's Emotional Intelligence Scale; individual Work Performance Questionnaire

Table 2. Correlation matrix of dimensions (N = 351)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Intrinsic motivation	1.00												
2 Integrated regulation	.537**	1.00											
3 Identified regulation	.041	.273**	1.00										
4 Introjected regulation	.236**	.498**	.494**	1.00									
5 External regulation	-.080	.038	.049	-.026	1.00								
6 Amotivation	-.012	.055	.022	.081	-.037	1.00							
7 Self-emotion appraisal	.041	.152**	.384**	.539**	.059	.167**	1.00						
8 Others-emotion appraisal	.371**	.256**	.159**	.255**	-.031	.167**	.135*	1.00					
9 Use of emotions	.049	.130*	.359**	.287**	.074	-.047	.388**	.244**	1.00				
10 Regulation of emotions	.087	.101	.216**	.233**	.067	-.307**	.147**	.286**	.460**	1.00			

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
11 Job Performance	-.155**	.028	.123*	.183**	.046	-.208**	.179**	.105*	.232**	.388**	1.00		
12 Total WM	.541**	.800**	.585**	.683**	.346**	.219**	.361**	.342**	.270**	.159**	.031	1.00	
13 Total EI	.217**	.238**	.397**	.472**	.059	-.059	.572**	.649**	.740**	.735**	.341**	.412**	1.00

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

* The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Note: WM = work motivation; EI = emotional intelligence

Table 3. Regression/mediation output (N = 351)

Regression of EI and JP									
Predictors	R	R ²	F(df)	DW	B	t	p-value	Tolerance	VIF
Constant value	.408	.167	17.287(4,346)**	1.554	2.799	21.578	.000		
SEA					.055	2.228	.027	.845	1.183
OEA					-.008	-.412	.681	.900	1.111
UoE					.011	.387	.699	.676	1.479
RoE					.132	6.483	.000	.755	1.324
Mediation of WM in the EI and JP Relationship									
Variables	b	SE	T	p	LLCI	ULCI	R ²	F(df)	Decision
EI/WM	.5166	.0612	8.4360	.000	.3962	.6371	.1694	71.1654(1,349)**	
EI/JP	.2427	.0337	7.1949	.000	.1764	.3090	.1303	26.0741(2,348)**	
EI/WM/JP	-.0644	.0269	-2.3979	.017	-.1173	-.0116			
Effects									
Direct	.2427	.0337	7.1949	.000	.1764	.3090			Partial
Indirect	-.0333	.0143			-.0639	-.0084			mediation
Total	.2094	.0310	6.7658	.000	.1485	.2703			

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Note: SEA = self-emotion appraisal; OEA = others emotion appraisal; UoE = use of emotion; RoE = regulation of emotion; EI = emotional intelligence; JP = job performance; WM = work motivation.

**p < .0001; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower level for 95% confidence interval; ULCI = upper level for 95% confidence interval; based on 5000 bootstrap samples

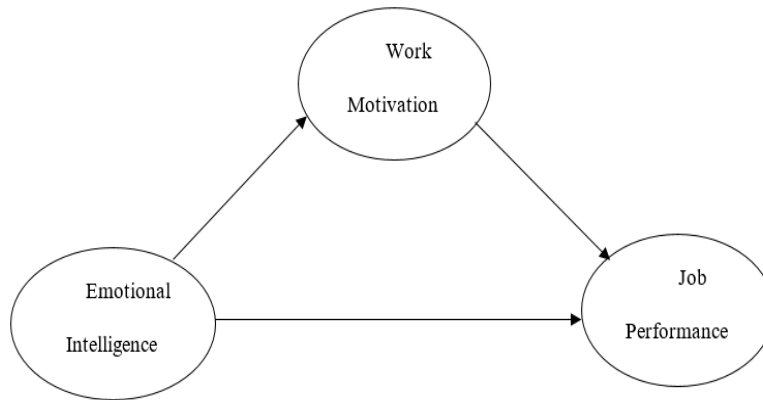


Fig. 1. Conceptualised research model
 Source: Author's Conceptualization (2023)

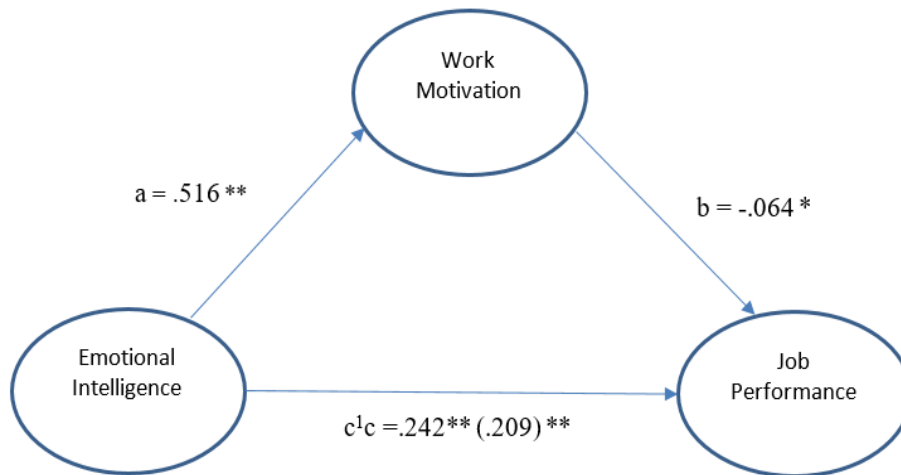


Fig. 2. Coefficients of the structural model indicating the regression path
 Note: 'a' and 'b' are coefficients of paths; 'c¹' and 'c' are direct and total effects; *p <.05, **p <.001

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Relatedness of Emotional Intelligence to Job Performance

The first hypothesis in the current study predicted the relationship between EI and JP among non-academic staff of select tertiary institutions. Part of the purpose is to determine which dimensions of EI are more important as predictors of JP. From the regression analysis, it can be deduced that EI is a significant predictor of JP among employees. The outcome further revealed that only self-emotion appraisal and regulation of emotion significantly influenced JP, while other emotion appraisal and use of emotion were statistically non-significant predictors of JP.

These findings are in congruence with the study of [79], who identified the regulation of emotions as a major dimension of EI capable of increasing JP. It was argued that employees with the ability to regulate their emotions exhibit attributes that facilitate better interpersonal relations for improved JP. This assertion on the importance of the regulation of emotion in predicting JP was also supported by other studies in the literature [26, 66]. In the current study, the use of emotion and other emotion appraisals was found to be statistically non-significant. However, this contradicts the findings of [78], who maintained that the use of emotion was the strongest predictor of performance, attributing the outcome to the sample being predominantly male. Other studies also found the use of emotion as a

significant predictor of employee performance [26, 66]. A possible reason for the contradictory result on the use of emotion in this study could be attributed to the choice of self-report scale in measuring the variables.

The practical implication of this finding is that regulation of emotion (which is the most significant predictor of JP) should be given top priority by employees to achieve improved performance at the workplace. This has to do with controlling one's emotions while relating to others. In addition, an individual member of an organisation needs to embrace self- or personal emotional appraisal by regularly assessing their emotional weaknesses and strengths to attain acceptable balance in their relationships with others. Improved performance and achievement of personal and corporate objectives are only attainable in an emotionally balanced environment. However, according to the findings, others' emotion appraisal may be given less attention within groups or organisations, as interpretation of others' emotions may sometimes yield false results and have no impact on JP.

The findings of this study align with the position of balance theory on intrapersonal and interpersonal appraisals of emotion in a social environment. [21] suggested that sentiment, which is subject to emotion, naturally drives human perception of his or her condition and relation to others. To achieve the required balance in the workplace, proper appraisal of one's emotional state becomes crucial to seamlessly regulating tense emotional situations [19]. Striking a balance between the pressing psychological or emotional needs of others and oneself requires efficient management of emotion. It is this emotion-aided cognitive process that tops the list of conditions necessary for a balanced relationship and peaceful coexistence for improved JP in the workplace.

4.2 Mediating Role of Motivation in the Emotional Intelligence-Performance Relationship

The second hypothesis of this study examined whether WM mediates the relationship between EI and JP in a sample of non-academic employees of tertiary institutions using the bootstrap method of mediation analysis. This hypothesis was supported as the results from mediation analysis revealed that WM partially mediated the relationship between EI and JP.

The findings from this hypothesis indicated that WM plays an important role as a mediator in the relationship between EI and JP. This finding is consistent with the studies of [38] and [22] who found WM as a partial mediator in the relationship between EI and JP. This implies that employees' level of emotional disposition to work could be positively influenced through appropriate motivational measures (such as professional training, awards, promotion, etc.) to achieve better performance in the workforce. The outcome, however, contradicts the findings of [51] who argued that WM does not mediate the effect of EI on JP based on data collected from 60 employees of a maritime firm. A possible reason for the variance could be attributed to the limited sample captured in the study, which increases the chances of analytical bias.

The managerial implication of this study suggests that organisations understand that improving WM among employees resultantly increases JP by influencing their EI. Motivated employees engage their duties with enthusiasm [72], and this positive work disposition enhances the management of emotion. This state of elevated EI ultimately drives up the performance of the employee and co-workers through healthy interpersonal relations. EI alone may no longer be sufficient for firms to get the best out of their employees, as emotions fail where drive is absent. Hence, organisations must include self-motivation in their recruitment criteria and constantly provide extrinsic motivation to their staff.

The findings from this hypothesis support the proposition of affective events theory (AET), which argues that human emotions can alter interpersonal relations and influence productivity. The theory maintains that positive emotions result from both self-induced and environmental factors, which serve as motivators. Suffice it to say that the motivation an employee derives from his or her work indirectly creates positive emotions, which alter work enthusiasm, thus improving JP.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of EI on the JP of administrative employees in tertiary institutions, with an additional focus on the mediating role of WM in the relationship. Findings from the first hypothesis revealed that EI had a significant positive effect on JP. Only regulation of emotion and self-emotion appraisal were significant on the four-dimensional scale measuring EI.

Furthermore, results from the second hypothesis indicated that WM partially mediates the effect of EI on JP among the sample.

This study contributes remarkably to the extant literature on the discourse of EI, WM, and JP. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to employ the Hayes bootstrap method [18] to examine the mediating effect of WM on the relationship between EI and JP among samples from multiple institutions. The findings on the mediating role of WM in promoting JP via improvement in EI would thus provide a game-changing perspective in academia and the business domain.

6. LIMITATION

This study is not without some limitations, which prepare the ground for improvement by future researchers. One of the shortcomings of the study lies in the use of self-report measurement scales for the variables, which makes it difficult for respondents to provide sincere answers to hypercritical questions. When presented with questionnaire items that critique some behavioural conduct in a social environment, people often prefer options that save their ego or reputation rather than the truth. Though the scales were tested for common method bias and found valid, future studies could adopt other-reported scales, particularly for performance measurement.

The scope of the study was limited to the non-academic staff of select institutions within a state. This makes it rather difficult to generalise the findings nationwide. Future studies could extend the scope to cover both academic and non-academic staff or extend the investigation to institutions in other geopolitical zones. Another drawback is found in the length of the research instrument. The questionnaire contains 59 items, which may be too voluminous for busy employees to duly complete. The absent-mindedness that characterises such boring exercises may result in inaccurate inputs. Future studies may reduce the subscales or items on the questionnaire.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the findings from Hypothesis 1 suggest that EI has a significant positive impact on JP, it is recommended that the management of organisations consider EI a requisite recruitment criterion for potential employees, especially in the service industry. Moreover, as previous

researchers have established that EI can be learned [46], management should create an enabling environment for employees to improve their EI skills through training, mentorship, and peer assessment to achieve increased JP.

Based on the outcome of Hypothesis 2, which identifies WM as a positive mediator of the relationship between EI and JP, this study recommends that managers put measures in place that lift the spirit of employees, whether by monetary reward or non-financial benefits. This gesture increases the emotional inclination towards duty, thereby facilitating increased performance on the job. Finally, we recommend that intrinsic motivation be assessed during the employee selection process, as passion for one's job is the mother of all motivation.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Before data collection, ethical approval was sought from the various institutions' research ethics committees in line with the stipulated guidelines of the American Psychological Association. The researchers approached the respondents personally and individually to obtain their consent for the use of the information expected in the questionnaire. The expected data was also clearly explained as being solely for scholarly purposes. Potential participants were informed of having the free will to either fill in or ignore any part of the research instrument as they wished. They were also guaranteed that the requested information was non-personal and that the supplied responses would be anonymized during analysis for security purposes. Contact details of the data collector were included in the consent form in case potential respondents needed inquiries.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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