

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDE TO WORK:  
THE BANKING SECTOR EXPERIENCE IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and the banking sector employees' attitude to work in Bayelsa State. The epistemological philosophies were used to guide the study. The population comprised all commercial banks in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa state. A suitable sample size of 120 was selected through the Taro Yamen formula and the simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain the participants responds. Primary data were used for the study and collected through questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was validated through expert opinions and reliability test with the use of cronbach alpha method. Thus, the result showed 85% reliability. The data elicited was analyzed and presented through the use of spearman rank order correlation coefficient. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were adopted for the analysis. The study revealed that emotional intelligence variables such as self-awareness and empathy have a positive significant relationship with employee work attitudes. It was also showed that self-awareness and empathy can contribute to the successful performance of employees in an organization, especially dealing with the banks' customers. Hence, it was concluded that self-awareness, empathy are emotional variables that link to the work attitudes of employee such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment which are positive feelings that can lead to improved organizational performance.*

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, empathy, employee work attitudes, job satisfaction

## **Introduction**

The term “emotional intelligence” in an English Language basis was first used by Wayne Payne, when he presented a dissertation in 1986 and used the term extensively, arguing that emotional awareness was a vital element to change in children (Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts, 2009). Since after the usage of the term in the 1980s, a modern approach has been applied by industrial psychologists in advancing work progress and success (Carmeli, 2003). Specifically, Mayer and Salovey (1990) presented the theory of emotional intelligence (EI), offering the first design of the notion and a demonstration of how it might be measured in their scholarly articles. In the early 1990s, the idea of intelligence quotient (IQ) was observed without question as the gold standard of excellence in organizations. This thinking changed in 1995 when Daniel Goleman critic Mayer and Salovey’s and began to feel “captivated” by the idea that there could be a new rationale about the components of life success (Goleman, 1995). Goleman used the term “emotional intelligence” to bring together an extensive range of scientific findings, drawing together what had been separate strands of research. It was Goleman that first used “emotional intelligence” to a wide audience and applied it in the business organization (Goleman, Boyatzis, Mekee, 2002).

Emotions according to Van Maanen and Kuuda (1989) refers to “indescribable feelings of the self-referential sort” and comprehensively defined as “self-referential feelings an employee experiences in regard to the performances he or she brings to the organization (Caruso and Salovey, 2004; DeWall, Baumeister, Mead and Vohs, 2011). From the explanations above, emotional intelligence is the subsection of social intelligence that encompasses the gift to understand one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to differentiate among them and to use this information to direct one’s thinking and action (Gayathri and Meenakshi; Goleman and Bayatzis, 2002). Emotional intelligence is well-thought-out to involve empathy; attention to, and insight of one’s emotions; accurate acknowledgment of one’s own and others’ moods; mood management or control over emotions; response with suitable emotions and behaviours in several life circumstances and balancing of honest expression of emotions against courtesy, thought, and respect (Goleman, 2001; Mandell & Pherwani, 2003).

More so, work attitudes are the feelings employees showcase in a work environment. Employee participation and job satisfaction are two key attitudes that are most relevant to employee work attitudes. Attitudes create an intention to act in a certain condition (Abrahams, 2007; Judge and Robbins, 2013). When employee develops good attitude towards work, he or she will avoid unacceptable work place attitude such as deviance behaviour, absenteeism, lateness to work etc. An employee that develops positive feelings towards work will be patriotic to safeguard the interest of the organization and will be guided by the firm’s learning process at all times (Hazoor and Masood, 2013). When employees lack the dimensions of emotional intelligence it could be difficult for him/ her to develop a positive feeling towards work and this attitude would affect the productivity of the organization (Armstrong, 2006). Thus emotional intelligent workers must have self-awareness. Self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one’s emotions,

strengths, weakness, needs and drives (Goleman, 2001). Workers with solid self-awareness are neither overly serious nor unrealistically hopeful. Rather, they are honest with themselves and with others. People who have high degree of self-awareness know how their feelings affect them, other people, and their job performance (Kirch, Turker and Kirch, 2000; Goleman et al, 2002). Another critical element that defines employee positive attitude in an organization is regarded as empathy. It means putting oneself into someone's shoes, be aware of their feelings and comprehend their needs. In the workplace, empathy can show a deep respect for co-workers and show that you care, as opposed to just going by rules and regulations (Carmeli, 2003). Therefore, this research paper looks at emotional intelligence and employee work attitude in the banking sector.

### **Prior Literature**

Emotional intelligence (EI) brings new depth to the understanding of human intelligence against the traditional emotional quotient (IQ). It increases the ability to assess an individual's intelligence. Generally, emotional intelligence addresses the emotional, social and survival magnitudes of intelligence, which are often more important for daily functioning than the traditional intellectual aspects of intelligence (Bar-On, 1997). Emotional intelligence has been defined in many ways by diverse scholars, giving importance to different elements of the concept. Mayer and Salovey (1997) stressed the rational components in their definition of EI, Goleman relates it to the way people function emotionally, if their function is at its potential or at least is not difficult (Goleman, 1995). EI is a multi-layered construct and we do not have a clear, simple definition of it. Nonetheless, the following are some of the definitions at present.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as "a form of social intelligence that encompasses the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to distinguish among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions". Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to identify emotions, to assess and create emotions so as to support thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotion so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Martinez (1997) refers to emotional intelligence as being "an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures" (Carmali, 2003). EI has been defined as the ability of a person to use emotions as a guiding tool for interpersonal effectiveness in his or her social environment. EI is the ability to choose the right feelings appropriate to a given situation and the skill to communicate these feelings effectively (Bar-On and Parker, 2000; Gayathri et al, 2013). It is the emotional competency which includes awareness of our own emotions, ability to identify and empathize with others' feelings, understanding the impact of one's emotions on others, and sensitivity to cultural sanctions for expression of emotions that constitutes EI (Goleman et al, 2002; Mandell et al, 2003; Kirch et al, 2000 & Abraham, 1999).

Different theories and perceptions attempt to enhance the understanding and explaining the skills, traits, and abilities related with emotional intelligence. While some might argue that the goal of research should be to identify and explain a singular theoretical framework to be labeled as the correct version of emotional intelligence, another approach would be to acknowledge that having multiple theories can often serve to clarify additional aspects of

composite psychological constructs. All of the theories and models in conceptualization of EI are under the canopy of three main lines of thought including: trait approach, ability approach and mixed approach these are the models suggested by (Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Bar-on, 1997 and Goleman, 1995). Each of their theoretical framework conceptualize emotional intelligence from one of two perspectives: as a form of pure intelligence consisting of mental ability only, or as a mixed intelligence consisting of both mental ability and personality characteristics like optimism, adaptability and well-being (Mandell, 2003; Goleman, 2001).

Till now, the only ability model of emotional intelligence is that projected by Mayer and Salovey (1997), they considered EI as a form of pure intelligence consisting of cognitive ability only. The two mixed models separate from each other; the differences in which are ascribed to the varying beliefs of what constitutes emotional intelligence. Reuven Bar-On conceptualized a model with personality dimensions, stressing the co-dependence of the ability aspects of emotional intelligence with personality traits and their application to well-being. On the other hand, Daniel Goleman suggested a mixed model in terms of performance by combining an individual's abilities and personality implementing their corresponding effects in the workplace.

### **Components of Emotional Intelligence**

Although varying names depending on the researcher (Salovey and Mayer, 1990) the components of EI can be divided into two major categories: intrapersonal (self-awareness, motivation, and self-regulation) and interpersonal (perceiving others' emotions and empathy).

#### **Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is the lead constituent of EI which comprises of having a thorough understanding of emotions, weaknesses, strengths, needs and drives of one's self. Individuals who possess a high degree of self-awareness are able to recognize their feelings and how it affects them, other people, and their performance at work. Abraham (2007) explains self-awareness as a person's ability to understand his or her feelings, bearing in mind changes in feelings from time to time. Self-awareness is a vital skill that allows the expert business-builders to go through the tough path of leadership: being able to project with conviction also simultaneously staying humble enough to receive criticisms, opposing opinions and open to new ideas. It is generally believed that the major mistakes and regrets occur due one being overly emotional, the moments when our feeling get the better part of us. In addition, emotions are remains from about 300 million years ago, during which they were essential for species to survive.

Caruso and Salovey (2004) claim that emotions contain information, which help to signal us about paramount event happening in our world, whether it is our social world, internal world, or our normal environment. Due to the fact that emotions contain information and affects thinking, emotions need to be integrated into our reasoning in an intelligent way to solve problems, and our behavior and sense of judgment. It is required that we remain open to emotions, whether suitable or not, and to strategize on how to apply wisdom in our moods. Intrapersonal skills which identify the significance of self-knowledge also make up EI. Self-awareness shows an appropriate perception of how one project self. Some researchers have identified it to mean self-monitoring.

### **Empathy**

Empathy plays a pronounced part in relationship management. It is that quality of an employee which can win the support and trust of others. Empathy skills let employees to comprehend better other peoples' perceptions and views, making the work atmosphere more pleasurable and industrious. Empathy makes sure that links ensue between individuals so that one and all are involved and no employee feels sidelined, and as such, an empathic employee is alleged to be an effective employee (Carmeli, 2003; Mandell et al, 2003 and Abrahams, 2007). Empathy has become more and more significant to success at work because empathic employees are more probable to have a suitable amount of openness about diversity and the variances between cultures (Atwater & Waldman, 2008). Martinovski, Traum and Marsella, (2007) claims empathy also plays an imperative role in increasing trust in employee-employee interactions. Empathy aids employees to have an enhanced understanding of new social environments, and assists them quickly learn and adjust to new settings. In similar vein, empathy skills also help employees have optimistic approach towards adjusting to new environments and developments, which generate a concerted atmosphere. Additionally, it is pointed out that the significance of empathy in employee comportment cannot be taken too lightly because empathy gives employees the control to read between the lines; thus, they are capable making right choices.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Employee Work Attitudes**

Emotions impact our thoughts and behaviour, but to explain this effect we first need to know about attitudes. Attitudes represent the cluster of beliefs, assessed feelings, and attitudinal intentions toward somebody, object, or event (Robbins, Judge and Vohra, 2012). Attitudes are judgments, whereas emotions are experiences. In other words, attitudes involve conscious logical reasoning, whereas emotions operate as events, often without our awareness (Adewuyi & Akinade, 2010). We also experience most emotions briefly, whereas our attitude toward someone or something is more stable over time. Attitudes include three components—beliefs, feelings, and behavioural intentions. Thus the components of attitude include cognitive, affective and behaviour (Robbins et al, 2012). Beliefs are the established perceptions about an object. These beliefs are perceived facts that you attain from past experience and other forms of learning, while feelings represent your positive or negative evaluations of the attitude object, while behaviour is the action component of the attitude. Workers or employee mostly confront emotional challenges or frustration as a result of lack of emotional intelligence. Employees without this quality also find it difficult to deal with their co-workers in an organization. Some people think mergers are good; others think they are bad.

### **Methodology**

The ontologies and epistemologies are philosophical parameters that guides theory building. The epistemological paradigms also guide the research design and methodology relevant to the study area. Research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. (Nworgu, 2006). In relation to this study, the survey design was selected therefore the researcher employed descriptive and inferential statistic methods to analyze data. The population of the study comprises all commercial banks in Yenagoa

metropolis, Bayelsa state of Nigeria. From the population, a usable sample size of 120 was selected through the Yaro Yamen formula from five commercial banks that was randomly selected and the simple random sampling was used to select the participants.

The primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaire and personal interview. While secondary data were obtained from journals articles, periodicals, company bulletins and past publications. The content validity of the questionnaire was determined through a critical examination of the instrument by expert in psychology. Some experts in measurement and evaluation also made necessary corrections and modifications in order to ensure that the content validity of the instrument and the final copy of the questionnaire was corrected by the experts before administering them to the respondents. The cronbach alpha method was used to test the reliability of the instrument that amount to 85% reliability. The data obtained are processed, presented and analysed through the use of tables and simple percentages. Thereafter, the hypothesized statements were tested using the nonparametric statistical tool of Correlation Coefficient ( $r_s$ ) through the use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS)

### **Analysis and Presentation of Result**

In this section, the data gathered through the questionnaire are analyzed and interpreted. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistical method was used through the application of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The table presented below shows the result of the hypothesis test.

**Table 1. Correlational Outcome between Self-Awareness and Employee Work Attitudes**

		<b>Correlations</b>	
		Self-Awareness	
Spearman's rho	Self-Awareness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	110
	Employee Work Attitudes	Correlation Coefficient	.906**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The spearman rank order correlation coefficient was run with the SPSS software to examine the relationship between self-awareness and employee work attitude in commercial banks. The outcome revealed that there is a strong relationship between self-awareness and employee work attitudes with  $\rho = .906$ . It is also significant @ [ $p - 0.00 < 0.01$ ] between self-awareness and employee work attitudes. This automatically makes the null hypothesis to be rejected. This shows that the psychological capital such as self-awareness is significant and vital to an employee's job participation and satisfaction in a work place (Carmali, 2003; Mandell, 2003 and Goleman, 2001). This outcome indicated positive relationship between self-awareness and employee work attitude was the position of (Bar-On and Parker, 2002) when they argued that self-awareness competency of one's

emotion can make an individual to take rational decisions while working for the organization. (Gayathri et al, 2013) also argued that emotional intelligence and self-awareness is the ability for one to know himself as he/she works with others for the common interest of the organization.

**Table 2. Correlational Outcome between Empathy and Employee Work Attitudes Correlations**

			Empathy	Employee Work Attitudes
Spearman's rho	Empathy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.970**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	110	110
	Employee Work Attitudes	Correlation Coefficient	.970**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used with the help of the SPSS software to determine the relationship between empathy and employee work attitudes. The result further showed that a positive relationship exists between empathy and employee work attitudes with rho = .970. It is also significant @ [p = 0.00 < 0.01] between empathy and employee work attitudes. This implies that the null hypothesis that says there is no relationship between empathy and employee work attitudes is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis which says there is a relationship between empathy and employee work attitudes is accepted. Employees with high level of empathy always put themselves in the shoes of customers and others working in the organization (Carmeli, 2003). This positive work attitude and feelings can create good image for the firm as members the organisation interact with the public. Service firms like banks must train employees to know and understand what customers go through while patronizing their organization (Caruso & Salovey, 2004).

**Conclusion/Recommendations**

Emotional intelligence is a psychology capital and a subsection of the social intelligence that can enhance the success of employees in an organization. Over the decades, this concept has been neglected because management before now gave more attention to tangible organizational resources than intangible organizational resources. The psychological capital or emotional intelligence gained momentum and recognized in recent times because of its relevance and connectivity to most vital assets (people) whose feelings, thinking and perceptions can affect their work attitudes such as job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment. The study revealed that there is a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and employee work attitude. Employees that have the ability to control themselves and be aware on their own feelings or emotions tend to be more successful in their work environment. The workers with the innate self-awareness ability can also help an individual carry out self-reporting survey or self-audit

that will enable him/her to take corrective measures when necessary. Another ingredient vital to the success of workers in an organization is empathy. That is, the ability to put one self in the shoes of others while performing their job. Managers and employees that lack emotional intelligence variable such as empathy can fail. This is true in the sense that most workers or employee that suffer emotional hijack tend to have relational problems with their peers and bosses. Thus this study concluded that there is a nexus between emotional intelligence and employees work attitude. The study also contributed that management should be aware of the employees' psychological capital and train and re-train workers to understand their psychological ability as it will enhance not only employees' performance but also the improvement of the organization's productivity.

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