

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Leadership effectiveness is increasingly important as public institutions respond to institutional reforms, technological change, workforce diversity, resource constraints, and growing demands for accountability and quality service delivery. Effective leadership therefore requires more than technical competence and formal authority; it also involves the ability to understand and regulate emotions, manage interpersonal relationships, motivate employees, and respond constructively to complex organisational situations. This study examined the effect of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness in selected public institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, it assessed the effects of self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence on leadership effectiveness and their combined contribution. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Data were collected from employees and managerial personnel in selected public institutions in Lagos State, Rivers State, Anambra State, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Of the 450 questionnaires distributed, 419 valid responses were retrieved, representing a 93.1% response rate. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), employing descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson product-moment correlation, diagnostic tests, and multiple linear regression. The results showed that self-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal/emotional competence, significantly and positively influenced leadership effectiveness. Self-regulation recorded the strongest individual effect. The regression model explained 63.8% of the variance in leadership effectiveness ($R^2 = .638$),

indicating substantial explanatory power. The findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence is an important predictor of leadership effectiveness in Nigerian public institutions and suggest the need to integrate emotional intelligence competencies into leadership development, recruitment, promotion, succession planning, and organisational capacity-building programmes.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, leadership effectiveness, self-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal competence, public institutions, Nigeria, multiple linear regression, SPSS.

Introduction

Leadership effectiveness remains a central concern in organisational research because the quality of leadership influences how organisations establish priorities, coordinate resources, motivate employees, respond to change, and achieve institutional objectives. This concern is particularly important in public institutions, where leaders must simultaneously deal with administrative responsibilities, political and social expectations, resource constraints, employee concerns, regulatory requirements, and growing demands for improved public service delivery. Contemporary organisational environments have therefore broadened the meaning of effective leadership beyond the possession of formal authority or technical expertise. The changing nature of organisational work has also increased the importance of leaders' interpersonal and emotional capabilities (Adelekan et al., 2018). Leaders routinely make decisions in situations characterised by uncertainty, pressure, competing interests, and interpersonal disagreements. Their effectiveness may therefore depend, in part, on their ability to recognise emotional signals, regulate their own responses, understand the perspectives of others, and use emotional information appropriately when interacting with employees and stakeholders. These capabilities are central to the concept of emotional intelligence (EI).

The concept of emotional intelligence emerged from psychological scholarship concerned with the relationship between emotion and intelligence. Salovey and Mayer (1990) conceptualised emotional intelligence as a set of abilities involving the appraisal and expression of emotions, the regulation of emotions, and the use of emotional information to guide thought and behaviour. Their formulation challenged the assumption that effective functioning could be understood exclusively in terms of traditional cognitive intelligence. Subsequent research expanded the concept and introduced ability-based, trait-based, and mixed approaches to its measurement and interpretation (Eze et al., 2019).

Within organisational research, emotional intelligence has become particularly relevant because organisational behaviour is inherently emotional and relational. Côté (2014) argued that emotions and emotional information have important implications for organisational behaviour, while George (2000) proposed that emotional intelligence can contribute to effective leadership through its influence on goal development, motivation, cooperation, trust, decision-making, and organisational change. Similarly, Wong and Law (2002) developed a concise measure of emotional intelligence for organisational research and demonstrated its relevance to leader and follower outcomes. The empirical evidence has continued to develop considerably. O'Boyle et al. (2011), in a meta-analysis of the relationship between EI and job performance, found evidence of a positive association between emotional intelligence and performance. Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004) also reported positive predictive validity for EI across performance-related criteria. More recent evidence has reinforced these conclusions. Doğru (2022), using meta-analytic evidence, found that emotional intelligence was positively associated with organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, and job

performance, while being negatively associated with job stress. The leadership-specific evidence is equally important. Harms and Credé (2010) conducted a meta-analysis examining EI and transformational and transactional leadership and found a substantial relationship when emotional intelligence and leadership were assessed using the same source, although the relationship became considerably smaller when different sources were used. More recently, Hsu et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership and provided further evidence that EI was positively associated with transformational leadership. A particularly comprehensive recent review was provided by Gerhardt et al. (2025). Their systematic review covered 101 empirical studies examining leader emotional intelligence and leader outcomes. The review concluded that leader EI was positively associated with leadership styles and behaviours, leader well-being, and leader performance, including leadership effectiveness. Importantly, the authors also highlighted continuing debates concerning construct definition, measurement, construct overlap, and the need for stronger research designs. This observation is particularly relevant to the present study because it supports the examination of clearly defined dimensions of emotional intelligence rather than treating EI as an overly broad and undifferentiated construct. Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez (2023) similarly conducted a hybrid literature review of 104 peer-reviewed publications examining emotional intelligence, leadership, and work teams. Their findings showed that leadership effectiveness, transformational leadership, team performance, and work-related attitudes were prominent themes in the literature. They concluded that emotionally intelligent leaders could influence both behavioural and organisational outcomes.

The relevance of emotional intelligence has also become increasingly recognised in African and Nigerian organisational settings. For example, Oyewunmi et al. (2015) examined leaders' emotional intelligence and employee performance in Nigeria's public healthcare sector using survey data and hierarchical regression and reported a significant relationship between leaders' EI and employee performance. Similarly, Amah (2023) examined leaders' EI among organisations in Lagos and found that leaders' emotional intelligence influenced employee engagement both directly and indirectly through employee voice and trust in direct leadership.

More recent Nigerian research has continued to reinforce the importance of EI. Kiishi (2024) investigated emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness at the University of Ibadan and reported a strong positive relationship between the constructs. Okoro and Chimezie (2023) also examined emotional intelligence and principals' effectiveness in selected secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, highlighting the relevance of EI to leadership effectiveness within an educational public-sector context. Recent international evidence further demonstrates the continuing relevance of EI to leadership. Gerhardt et al. (2025) emphasised the increasing complexity of leadership roles and argued that emotional competencies could assist leaders in dealing with challenging interpersonal and organisational situations. In a 2025 study of healthcare professionals, EI was examined alongside AI-driven human-resource management as a predictor of leadership effectiveness and employee performance, further demonstrating the relevance of emotional competencies in technologically changing workplaces.

Despite this growing body of literature, important gaps remain. First, much of the established literature on emotional intelligence and leadership has been generated outside Nigeria. Second, studies conducted in Nigeria have frequently focused on specific sectors, including healthcare, education, banking, or individual organisations. Third, there remains insufficient empirical evidence examining how different emotional competencies individually and collectively contribute to leadership effectiveness across selected public institutions. Fourth, methodological

differences across existing studies make direct comparison difficult because EI has been operationalised using different models and measurement instruments. The present study addresses these issues by examining three dimensions of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence and their relationship with leadership effectiveness in selected Nigerian public institutions. The revised framework provides a parsimonious model that can be examined using multiple linear regression in SPSS.

Public institutions are expected to provide effective services, implement government policies, manage public resources responsibly, and respond to the changing needs of citizens. Achieving these objectives depends partly on the effectiveness of the leaders responsible for coordinating employees and organisational activities. However, leadership within public institutions can be challenging because managers often operate within bureaucratic procedures, limited resources, competing stakeholder expectations, organisational politics, and increasing pressure for improved performance. Technical knowledge and administrative authority remain necessary, but they may not, on their own, be sufficient to ensure effective leadership. Leaders are required to manage their own reactions, communicate with employees, resolve conflicts, motivate staff, respond to emotional concerns, and maintain organisational stability during periods of change. Consequently, the emotional and interpersonal capabilities of leaders may influence how effectively they perform their roles. Although emotional intelligence has been extensively examined internationally, there remains a need for more context-specific evidence from Nigeria. Existing Nigerian studies provide useful insights, but many have focused on individual sectors or specific employee outcomes rather than leadership effectiveness across multiple public institutions. For instance, Oyewunmi et al. (2015) focused on public healthcare, while Kiishi (2024) examined the University of Ibadan.

Another problem concerns the fragmentation of emotional intelligence research. Researchers have employed different definitions, dimensions, and measurement approaches. Gerhardt et al. (2025) identified this fragmentation as a continuing issue in EI research and noted substantial variation in the measurement of emotional intelligence across studies. The present study therefore adopts a clearly specified framework that groups related emotional competencies into three major predictors. The central problem addressed by this study is therefore the limited empirical understanding of how self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence individually and jointly influence leadership effectiveness in Nigerian public institutions. The general objective is to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on leadership effectiveness in selected public institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to: determine the effect of self-awareness on leadership effectiveness; examine the effect of self-regulation on leadership effectiveness; assess the effect of interpersonal/emotional competence on leadership effectiveness; and determine the joint effect of self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence on leadership effectiveness.

The following null hypotheses were tested:

Ho1: Self-awareness has no significant effect on leadership effectiveness in selected public institutions in Nigeria.

Ho2: Self-regulation has no significant effect on leadership effectiveness in selected public institutions in Nigeria.

Ho3: Interpersonal/emotional competence has no significant effect on leadership effectiveness in selected public institutions in Nigeria.

Ho4: Self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence have no significant joint effect on leadership effectiveness in selected public institutions in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence has developed into an influential construct in psychology, organisational behaviour, human-resource management, and leadership research. However, the concept does not have a single universally accepted definition. The literature contains ability-based, self-report, trait, and mixed models of EI. Gerhardt et al. (2025) noted that this theoretical and measurement fragmentation remains an important issue in contemporary EI research. The ability-based approach regards EI as a set of cognitive-emotional abilities involving the perception, understanding, use, and regulation of emotions. Self-report and mixed approaches incorporate broader behavioural and personality-related competencies. The present study adopts a behavioural organisational perspective because its primary interest is not to determine emotional ability through performance tests but to examine emotional competencies as they relate to leadership behaviour. The organisational relevance of EI is supported by extensive empirical evidence. O'Boyle et al. (2011) found a positive relationship between EI and job performance in a meta-analysis, while Doğru (2022) reported positive relationships between EI and organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, and job performance. The relationship with leadership is also well established. Harms and Credé (2010) found a meaningful association between EI and leadership behaviours, while Hsu et al. (2022) provided more recent meta-analytic evidence linking EI to transformational leadership.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognise and understand personal emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and behavioural tendencies. In leadership, self-awareness enables leaders to recognise how their emotions may influence judgement, communication, and interactions with employees. A leader who is aware of emotional triggers is more likely to identify potential biases or inappropriate reactions before they affect decision-making. Self-awareness may therefore support reflective decision-making, interpersonal sensitivity, and behavioural consistency. The importance of self-awareness is consistent with the broader emotional intelligence literature. Salovey and Mayer (1990) positioned accurate appraisal of one's own emotions as a central element of EI, while George (2000) linked emotional understanding to effective leadership processes. Recent measurement research also supports the continued use of multidimensional EI measures in organisational research. Acosta-Prado et al. (2022), for example, examined the psychometric properties of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale among managers and found evidence supporting its use in organisational research. In the present study, self-awareness is expected to improve leadership effectiveness because leaders who understand their emotional strengths and limitations may be better able to manage decisions, communicate appropriately, and respond constructively to employees.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation refers to the capacity to control emotional impulses and behavioural reactions, particularly under stressful or challenging circumstances. It involves maintaining composure, delaying impulsive responses, and choosing responses that are appropriate to the organisational situation. Leadership frequently involves situations in which emotional control is necessary. Leaders may encounter criticism, resistance to change, employee grievances, performance problems, interpersonal disputes, and competing demands. In such circumstances, uncontrolled

emotional reactions can damage trust and communication, whereas effective regulation may promote stability and constructive problem-solving. George (2000) identified the management of emotions as an important mechanism through which EI contributes to leadership effectiveness. Joseph and Newman (2010) also developed an integrative model showing how emotional processes can influence workplace performance through emotion regulation and related mechanisms. The relevance of self-regulation is also reflected in contemporary leadership research. Gerhardt et al. (2025) noted that leaders who are unable to regulate emotions may experience greater difficulty managing stress and performing effectively, while the broader review found positive relationships between leader EI and leader performance. Accordingly, self-regulation is expected to have a positive effect on leadership effectiveness.

Interpersonal/Emotional Competence

Interpersonal/emotional competence represents the relational component of emotional intelligence in the present study. It incorporates the ability to understand others, demonstrate empathy, communicate effectively, motivate employees, establish constructive relationships, and manage interpersonal difficulties. The decision to combine motivation, empathy, and social skills under interpersonal/emotional competence is based on the need to produce a parsimonious regression model while preserving the substantive content of the original five-dimensional framework. Although the three components are conceptually distinct, they are closely connected through their emphasis on understanding and influencing interpersonal behaviour. Empathy enables leaders to understand employees' perspectives and emotional experiences. Social competence enables leaders to communicate, build relationships, resolve conflict, and influence others. Motivation provides the energy and persistence required to pursue organisational goals. Together, these capabilities represent the outward-facing behavioural dimension of emotional intelligence. Côté (2014) emphasised that emotional intelligence has important consequences for interpersonal processes in organisations. Similarly, Miao et al. (2018) found cross-cultural evidence that leader EI can influence subordinate task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. More recent Nigerian evidence also indicates that leaders' EI can influence employee engagement through mechanisms involving employee voice and trust in leadership (Amah, 2023). The relational importance of EI is particularly relevant in public institutions, where leaders depend heavily on cooperation, communication, coordination, and trust to implement organisational objectives.

Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness refers to the extent to which a leader successfully influences employees, coordinates organisational activities, makes appropriate decisions, facilitates employee performance, and contributes to the achievement of organisational objectives. Leadership effectiveness should be distinguished from leadership position. Holding a formal managerial position does not automatically imply that an individual is an effective leader. Effectiveness concerns the quality and consequences of leadership behaviour. George (2000) argued that effective leadership involves establishing collective goals, communicating the importance of organisational activities, generating confidence and enthusiasm, facilitating cooperation, encouraging flexibility, and maintaining a meaningful organisational identity. Recent research has similarly positioned leadership effectiveness as an important leader outcome. Gerhardt et al. (2025), after reviewing 101 empirical studies, concluded that leader emotional intelligence was positively associated with leader effectiveness and other task-related leader outcomes. In Nigeria, evidence from public and educational institutions provides further contextual support. Oyewunmi et al. (2015) found a significant relationship between leaders' EI

and employee performance in public healthcare, while Kiishi (2024) reported a significant relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness at the University of Ibadan.

Theoretical Framework

Emotional Intelligence Theory

The theoretical foundation of this study is the emotional intelligence perspective originally articulated by Salovey and Mayer (1990). The theory proposes that emotional information constitutes a meaningful form of information that individuals can perceive, understand, regulate, and use in guiding thought and behaviour. Emotional intelligence therefore extends conventional understandings of human capability by recognising that effective functioning involves both cognitive and emotional processes. Salovey and Mayer (1990) initially conceptualised EI as involving the appraisal and expression of emotions, regulation of emotion, and the use of emotional information in adaptive behaviour. Their conceptualisation subsequently influenced the development of ability-based measures and broader organisational models of emotional intelligence. The theoretical relevance of EI to leadership arises from the fact that leadership is inherently interpersonal. Leaders influence others through communication, motivation, decision-making, relationship management, conflict resolution, and the establishment of organisational direction. These activities frequently involve emotional exchanges. George (2000) therefore argued that emotions and emotional intelligence play a central role in leadership because leaders must generate enthusiasm, confidence, cooperation, trust, and commitment while simultaneously managing their own emotional responses. Côté (2014) similarly demonstrated that emotional intelligence has important implications for organisational behaviour because emotions influence interpersonal processes, social interactions, and workplace decision-making.

Recent evidence supports the continued relevance of this theoretical perspective. Hsu et al. (2022) found a positive association between EI and transformational leadership, while Gerhardt et al. (2025) concluded from a systematic review that leader EI was positively associated with leader effectiveness and other leadership outcomes. The theory therefore provides an appropriate foundation for the present study because the three independent variables—self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence—represent complementary ways through which leaders may use emotional information to improve their effectiveness.

Empirical Review

The empirical relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness has been examined across different sectors and national contexts. Harms and Credé (2010) conducted a meta-analysis based on 62 independent samples and examined the association between EI and transformational and transactional leadership. Their findings indicated that EI was substantially related to leadership behaviour when both variables were assessed using the same source, although the relationship became considerably smaller when different sources were used. This finding is methodologically important because it highlights the possibility of common-source bias in EI and leadership research. O'Boyle et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of the relationship between EI and job performance. Their study demonstrated that emotional intelligence was positively associated with job performance, although the magnitude of the relationship differed across EI conceptualisations. Lv et al. (2018) specifically examined the relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness through meta-analysis and reported evidence of a positive relationship. This finding provides direct support for the central proposition of the present study. Hsu et al. (2022) extended the evidence through a meta-analysis

of EI and transformational leadership. Their findings showed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, reinforcing the argument that emotional competencies may support leadership behaviours associated with employee motivation and organisational change. Doğru (2022) examined EI and several employee outcomes through meta-analysis. The results showed positive relationships between EI and organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, and job performance, as well as a negative relationship with job stress. Acosta-Prado et al. (2022) investigated the psychometric properties of the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale among Colombian managers. Their findings provided contemporary evidence supporting the reliability and construct validity of a widely used EI instrument in managerial research. Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez (2023) reviewed 104 peer-reviewed studies examining emotional intelligence, leadership, and work teams. The review identified leadership effectiveness and team performance as important areas within the EI literature and concluded that emotionally intelligent leaders could contribute to positive behavioural and organisational outcomes. Pirsoul et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of emotional intelligence and career-related outcomes. Their findings indicated that EI represented a meaningful resource for individuals dealing with career-related challenges and outcomes. This supports the broader proposition that EI has implications beyond immediate interpersonal interactions. In the Nigerian context, Oyewunmi et al. (2015) investigated leaders' EI and employee performance in the public healthcare sector. Their use of hierarchical regression produced evidence of a significant relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee performance. Amah (2023) investigated leaders' EI using data from 250 subordinates and their leaders in Lagos-based organisations. The study found that leaders' EI affected employee engagement both directly and indirectly through employee voice and trust in direct leadership.

Kiishi (2024) investigated EI and leadership effectiveness at the University of Ibadan. The study employed four EI dimensions such as self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, regulation of emotions, and use of emotions, and reported a strong positive and significant relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness. Gerhardt et al. (2025) provide the most comprehensive recent synthesis relevant to this study. Their systematic review covered 101 empirical studies and found that leader EI was positively associated with leader effectiveness, leadership behaviours, and other leader outcomes. At the same time, the review cautioned that the EI literature remains fragmented because researchers use different definitions and measures. Recent evidence from Nigeria also continues to show interest in the relationship. Anyakoha and Nwolisa (2025), for example, examined EI, leadership effectiveness, and team performance in high-stress corporate environments in Lagos State. Although their organisational context differs from the present public-sector focus, the study reinforces the contemporary relevance of emotional competencies to leadership in Nigeria.

Research Gap

The literature reviewed reveals three major gaps. Firstly, there is a contextual gap. Although substantial international evidence links EI with leadership and organisational outcomes, relatively fewer studies have examined the relationship across Nigerian public institutions. Existing Nigerian evidence has often been concentrated within specific sectors or organisations. Secondly, there is a conceptual and measurement gap. EI research contains considerable variation in definitions, dimensions, and measurement instruments. Gerhardt et al. (2025) specifically identified fragmentation in EI constructs and measurement as an unresolved issue.

The present study responds by explicitly defining three dimensions and explaining their conceptual relationship. Third, there is a methodological gap. Many recent studies employ SEM or other advanced modelling techniques. While such methods can be useful, conventional multiple regression remains appropriate where the objective is to estimate the individual and joint predictive contribution of several observed or composite independent variables to a continuous dependent variable. The present study therefore uses SPSS multiple regression to provide a transparent and readily interpretable estimate of the independent and joint effects of the three predictors.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The design was considered appropriate because the research sought to collect standardised responses from a relatively large number of respondents and determine the statistical relationships between emotional intelligence dimensions and leadership effectiveness. The design was consistent with the objectives of the study because the investigation focused on measurable constructs and hypotheses that could be statistically tested using correlation and multiple regression. The target population consisted of employees and managerial personnel in selected public institutions in Nigeria. The study focused on institutions located in Lagos State, Rivers State, Anambra State, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A minimum sample size of 384 respondents was considered adequate for a large or indeterminate population at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. To accommodate possible non-response and unusable questionnaires, 450 questionnaires were administered.

Of the 450 questionnaires distributed, 419 were properly completed and retrieved, resulting in a response rate of 93.1%. The relatively high retrieval rate provided an adequate number of observations for descriptive, correlational, and multiple-regression analyses.

Distribution of Questionnaires

Table 1: Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaires

Location	Distributed	Retrieved	Retrieval Rate (%)
Lagos State	115	103	89.6
Rivers State	115	112	97.4
Anambra State	115	106	92.2
Abuja (FCT)	105	98	93.3
Total	450	419	93.1

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two principal sections. Section A captured the demographic characteristics of respondents, including age, gender, educational qualification, position, and years of service. Section B contained statements measuring self-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal/emotional competence, and leadership effectiveness. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; and 5 = Strongly Agree. The use of structured self-report measures is common in organisational EI research. Wong and Law (2002) developed one of the most widely used short EI measures for organisational research, while Acosta-Prado et

al. (2022) provided more recent evidence concerning its psychometric performance in a managerial sample.

Model Specification

The functional relationship is expressed as: $LE = f(SA, SR, IEC)$

The regression equation is specified as: $LE = \beta_0 + \beta_1SA + \beta_2SR + \beta_3IEC + \varepsilon$

Where:

- LE = Leadership Effectiveness;
- SA = Self-Awareness;
- SR = Self-Regulation;
- IEC = Interpersonal/Emotional Competence;
- β_0 = regression constant;
- β_1 – β_3 = regression coefficients; and
- ε = stochastic error term.

The model permits the estimation of both the individual contribution of each predictor and the joint explanatory power of the three predictors.

The study used SPSS Statistics for data analysis which involved descriptive statistics through frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarise respondent characteristics and study variables. Inferential for reliability analysis, Correlation analysis and Multiple linear regression. The hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level.

Results and Discussion

Results

Respondents' Years of Service

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Years of Service

Years of Service	Frequency	Percentage
1–5 years	91	21.7
6–10 years	213	50.8
Over 10 years	115	27.4
Total	419	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The results indicate that 91 respondents (21.7%) had between one and five years of service, 213 respondents (50.8%) had between six and ten years, and 115 respondents (27.4%) had more than ten years of experience. Overall, 328 respondents, representing 78.3% of the sample, had more than five years of work experience. This indicates that most respondents had substantial exposure to organisational procedures and workplace interactions.

Multiple Regression Results

Regression Coefficients

Dependent Variable: Leadership Effectiveness

Predictor	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
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Constant	0.842	0.214	3.935	0.000	—	—
Self-Awareness	0.386	0.082	4.707	0.000	0.624	1.603
Self-Regulation	0.298	0.086	3.465	0.001	0.587	1.703
Interpersonal/Emotional Competence	0.341	0.079	4.316	0.000	0.651	1.536

Model: Leadership Effectiveness = 0.842 + 0.386(Self-Awareness) + 0.298(Self-Regulation) + 0.341(Interpersonal/Emotional Competence)

Interpretation of the coefficients

The results indicate that self-awareness has a positive and statistically significant effect on leadership effectiveness ($\beta = 0.324$, $t = 4.707$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H_{01} is rejected.

Similarly, self-regulation has a positive and statistically significant effect on leadership effectiveness ($\beta = 0.251$, $t = 3.465$, $p = 0.001$). Hence, H_{02} is rejected.

Interpersonal/emotional competence also has a positive and statistically significant effect on leadership effectiveness ($\beta = 0.296$, $t = 4.316$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, H_{03} is rejected.

The VIF values range from 1.536 to 1.703, while tolerance values range from 0.587 to 0.651. These values indicate that there is no serious multicollinearity problem among the independent variables.

Hypothesis-testing table

Hypothesis	Result	Decision
H₀₁: Self-awareness has no significant effect on leadership effectiveness.	$\beta = 0.324$, $p < 0.001$	Reject H₀₁
H₀₂: Self-regulation has no significant effect on leadership effectiveness.	$\beta = 0.251$, $p = 0.001$	Reject H₀₂
H₀₃: Interpersonal/emotional competence has no significant effect on leadership effectiveness.	$\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.001$	Reject H₀₃
H₀₄: Self-awareness, self-regulation and interpersonal/emotional competence have no significant joint effect on leadership effectiveness.		

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness in selected Nigerian public institutions using a three-dimensional emotional intelligence framework comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence. The theoretical and empirical literature provides substantial support for examining emotional intelligence as a potential determinant of leadership effectiveness. Meta-analytical and systematic-review evidence indicates positive relationships between EI and leadership behaviour, leader performance, employee outcomes, and organisational outcomes (Doğru, 2022; Hsu et al., 2022; Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Gerhardt et al., 2025). The Nigerian

literature also provides evidence that emotional intelligence is relevant to employee and leadership outcomes within public-sector and organisational contexts.

The study therefore argues that effective leadership in Nigerian public institutions requires more than technical and administrative competence. Emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal competence may provide important behavioural resources through which leaders influence employees and achieve organisational objectives.

Recommendations

Emotional Intelligence Training: Public institutions should incorporate emotional intelligence into leadership development programmes. Training should address self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, communication, conflict management, and relationship development.

Leadership Assessment: Emotional competencies should be considered alongside academic qualifications, professional experience, technical competence, and administrative performance during leadership selection and promotion.

Self-Regulation Development: Leadership programmes should provide practical training in stress management, emotional control, reflective decision-making, and conflict management.

Interpersonal Competence: Managers should receive training in active listening, employee communication, negotiation, team development, conflict resolution, and constructive feedback.

Mentoring and Coaching: Mentoring and coaching should be integrated into leadership-development programmes. Recent research suggests that mentoring can contribute to the development of leaders' emotional intelligence, particularly when organisational conditions support learning and reflection (Prummer et al., 2024).

Succession Planning: Public institutions should consider emotional competence when identifying potential future leaders. Recent research has specifically examined the use of behaviour-based 360-degree EI assessments in leadership succession and found that EI assessment can provide additional information about leadership capability and performance.

Practical Implications

The study has several practical implications.

First, public-sector leadership development should move beyond technical training and incorporate emotional and interpersonal competencies.

Secondly, human-resource managers can use emotional-intelligence assessment as one component of broader leadership-development and succession-planning processes.

Third, managers who develop stronger emotional regulation and interpersonal competence may be better equipped to manage conflict, employee concerns, organisational change, and stakeholder expectations.

Fourth, public institutions should create organisational cultures that encourage respectful communication, employee voice, constructive feedback, teamwork, and psychologically supportive leadership.

These implications are consistent with contemporary research showing that leader EI is associated with leader performance and effectiveness and that emotional competencies can be developed through appropriate organisational interventions.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes to the literature in four main respects.

First, it contributes empirical evidence concerning emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness within Nigerian public institutions.

Second, it provides a more parsimonious conceptualisation of emotional intelligence by grouping related motivational, empathic, and social competencies under interpersonal/emotional competence while retaining self-awareness and self-regulation as separate dimensions.

Third, it examines both individual and joint effects, allowing the study to determine whether the three emotional competencies independently and collectively explain leadership effectiveness.

Fourth, it contributes methodologically by applying multiple linear regression using SPSS. This provides a transparent statistical framework for examining individual predictors and the overall significance of the regression model.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should:

- i. employ longitudinal designs to examine changes in leadership effectiveness over time;
- ii. use multi-source assessments involving leaders, subordinates, peers, and supervisors;
- iii. compare emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness across public and private organisations;
- iv. examine whether organisational culture moderates the relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness;
- v. investigate employee trust, engagement, psychological safety, and organisational commitment as possible mediating mechanisms;
- vi. conduct cross-country studies involving different African public-sector contexts; and
- vii. investigate how digital transformation and artificial intelligence are changing the emotional competencies required of public-sector leaders.

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