

Does Social Skill and Empathy as Emotional Intelligence Measures Drive Organizational Performance of Telecommunication Companies in Nigeria?

OKWUISE, U.Y Ph.D^{1*}, AGARE, O²

^{*1-2} Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Corresponding Author
OKWUISE, U.Y Ph.D

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated whether social skill and empathy as emotional intelligence measures drive organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria. The study focuses on ten (10) telecommunications firms and survey research design was employed in determining whether social skill and empathy affect the level of performance of companies in the telecommunication industry. Questionnaire was the main instrument of data collection which was administered to a sample of one hundred and twenty-three (123) respondents who are employees of selected telecommunication companies in Delta State, Nigeria. Data collected were analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The result of the multiple regression models revealed that there is significant relationship between social skills (t-value = 5.231; p-value = 0.041 < 0.05%), empathy (t-value = 3.759; p-value = 0.000 < 0.05%), and organizational performance. The study concludes that social skill and empathy as emotional intelligence measures drive performance of telecommunications companies in Nigeria. On the basis of the findings, the study recommends that social skills of management should be maintained to make subordinates' participate effectively towards attainment of organizational goals and objectives so as to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, reflective, learning from experience and open to candid feedback. The study contributes to knowledge by filling the lacuna in the management literature on what is known about social skill and empathy as measures of emotional intelligence in driving performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria.

Keywords: Social skill; Emotional intelligence; Empathy; Performance; Telecommunication firms.

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Introduction

The Nigerian telecommunication industry has witnessed influx in participants, hence making competition (effective service delivery and customers' retention) and performance to be on the high. With this in mind, telecommunication companies are pushed to come up with not just a strategy that looks at customers' retention, but that which looks at employees' level of emotional intelligence. Armani (2022) stated that the primary aim of business organizations is profit maximization and in order to achieve this aim, the firm usually assemble machines, materials, men and other resources and then, provide a well-coordinated leadership to produce the desired result. However, prominent amongst the various inputs of a business organization is human resource.

In the current business world, humans are considered as the success factor for any business. Thus, appropriate strategy is at all times needed to be introduced to the workforce that will enable them to be effective and efficient in meeting the goals of the organization. It is on this premise that William, Todd and Gohaz (2016) state that a top priority for many organizations in the face of an ever changing and dynamic business environment is to look beyond traditional strategies for management development and recruitment to create a cadre of leaders capable of moving the company forward in order to achieve set goals which is high organisational performance. Organizational performance comprises the actual output or result of an organization as measured against

its intended output, or goals and objectives. It is also seen as the success or fulfilment of organization at end of program/projects as it is intended (Wikipedia, 2024).

Madeline (2022) further put forward that organizational performance is the ability of an organization to reach its goals and optimize results. In the today's workforce, performance of an organization can be seen also as the firm's ability to achieve goals in a state of constant change. Emotional intelligence (EI) has attracted considerable attention from business experts and intellectuals in recent years. This personality-related aspect has been widely argued by educationists in the field of Behaviour and management sciences (Alotaibi, Amin & Winterton, 2020; Naz, Li, Nisar&Rafiq, 2019). As the global environment today is extremely diverse, the emotional understanding and the output of employees need to be linked. Emotional intelligence is therefore important for the presentation of the company and for the growth as workers are determined primarily to achieve their objectives The emotions of the employee also play a vital role in helping them navigate this stimulating climate of transition (Alonazi, 2020). Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and regulate the emotions in one's own self and others and to make use of this information in order to guide one's thinking and actions (Giardini & Frese, 2006; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2018). Emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to appropriately and successfully respond to a vast variety of emotional stimuli being elicited from the inner self



and immediate environment. Emotional intelligence plays an important role in the workplace. This study therefore seeks to establish empirically if social skill and empathy as emotional intelligence measures drive organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Social Skills

Respect for others, reciprocal regard, dedication, openness, tolerance, empathy, negotiation, communication, and so forth are all part of the social skill set (Schuetz, 2021). It entails being able to attend to one another's needs, develop a relationship over time, and communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Skills in social awareness allow one to ask for the perspectives of others while listening attentively and non-judgmentally.

While critically important for leaders, particularly those in diverse communities or who serve as boundary spanning ambassadors for their organizations, over-use of this skill can lead to unnecessary deference to the group norms and an inability to push group members with competing or incompatible views toward solutions (Bar-On, 1997, Bar-On, 2002, Mayer et al 2002, Pearman 2023).

According to Goleman (2015), social skills are useful for influencing others, forming and managing teams, and driving change. The benefits of social connection are numerous as well. It provides self-assurance and social validation. It offers managers numerous benefits. It can assist with a variety of tasks that are impossible to perform on your own, such as obtaining team support or finishing a project (Pettry, 2006).

Empathy

Since "empathy is the ability to see the world from another person's perspective," it is essential to an employee's emotional intelligence (EI) in determining how they will behave on the job (Stein & Book, 2021). When someone is feeling empathy, they attempt to see things from their perspective and strive to comprehend the thoughts and feelings of others in order to understand one another's behaviours (Stein & Book, 2001; Goleman, 2011).

Furthermore, empathy refers to the way our minds communicate with one another and is typically associated with other feelings like empathy (Coplan & Goldie, 2011). It is considered by many to be a crucial leadership skill (Stein 2011, Stein & Book 2006, Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). When underused, one risks being perceived as cold, uncaring, self centered or overly task-focused (Bar-On 1997, Bar-On 2002, Mayer et al 2022). Lack of empathy can cause a lack of trust from others or lack of confidence in the ability to confide in the leader.

Poorly developed skills in empathy can lead one to be surprised in other people's reactions as well (Mayer et al 2002, Pearman 2023). However, empathy can be overused, causing challenges in separating feelings from business, inability to make tough decisions, an inability to say no, and denying one's own feelings (Bar-On 1997, Bar-On 2002, Mayer et al 2002, Pearman 2003).

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is defined by Hellriegel et al (2019) as presented by Oluseyi and Ayo (2019), as the organization's level of goal achievement in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of its resources and human skills. They also present the views of Cummings and Schwab (cited in Oluseyi & Ayo, 2019) on the same issue who believe that organizational performance is ultimately an outcome of social and contextual phenomenon through interplay with environmental variables that influences performance primarily through their effect on the individual performance ability and capacity.

According to Hubbard et al. (2022), high-performing organisations are those that have achieved results that are above average in relation to the inputs used. In view of the above, Oluseyi and Ayo (2019), again stated that the view of Behling and Mcfillen (1996) who confirmed the link between high performance and management skills to be close. Behling and Mcfillen (1996) opined that through the development of a model wherein the behaviour and activities of management is said to give rise to inspiration and motivation management can empower their workforce, resulting in exceptionally high effort, exceptionally high commitment and willingness to take risks.

Oluseyi and Ayo (2019) assert that it has been widely accepted that effective organizations require effective management and organizational performance will suffer when the management is ineffective and inadequate. In organisational studies, one of the most commonly studied constructs is emotional intelligence. Numerous desirable organisational outcomes, including work performance, job happiness, organisational citizenship behaviour, and organisational commitment, have been demonstrated to be significantly correlated with emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to control one's feelings and communicate them in a way that makes it possible for others to collaborate in a positive and open way towards shared objectives. Employees will appreciate feelings when the executive does. Therefore, if the manager exudes optimism, confidence, creativity, flexibility, tolerance, respect, and compassion, it is likely that the staff will feel the same way. Hence, we believe that enhanced level of social skill and empathy as emotional intelligence variables can result in positive outcomes, especially organizational performance.

Theoretical Framework

The study is hinged on the Mayer, Salovey and Caruso's EI Ability model. According to this model, people utilise their perceived knowledge of emotions and how to control them to influence their decision-making and to help them think more clearly. The emphasis of this EI framework is on the four-branch model of EI. The Model of Four Branch The four-branch ability model of EI was created by Mayer and associates in 2004. The authors propose that emotional intelligence (EI) can be categorised into four distinct domains based on an individual's ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions. These branches, which go from managing emotions to perceiving them, correspond to how the skill fits into the person's entire personality (Mayer et al., 2004).

Stated differently, branch 4 (emotion management) is incorporated into the person's objectives and goals, while branches 1 and 2 represent the relatively independent components of information processing that are believed to be bound in the

emotion system (Mayer et al., 2004). Additionally, every branch has a progression of talents from more fundamental to more advanced in terms of development. Let's look at every branch: This area of study deals with the perception of emotion, which includes the ability to recognise different emotions in people's facial and body language. Communicating with the face and voice reflects nonverbal perception and emotional expression (Mayer et al., 2004). The capacity to use feelings to support reasoning is included in a branch

This section stands for the ability to comprehend emotion, which includes the ability to analyse feelings, recognise probable patterns in emotions across time, and recognise the effects of emotions. It also involves the ability to categorise and distinguish between different emotions. This area of study, emotional self-management, takes into account a person's personality, goals, self-awareness, and social awareness in order to shape how they control their emotions (Mayer et al., 2004). These abilities, in the words of Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2016), are what characterise EI.

In 2016, Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey revised the four-branch model in light of advancements in EI research. They stated that the mental skills associated with emotional intelligence are yet unknown and gave other examples of problem-solving (Mayer et al., 2016). EI, according to Mayer and associates (2008), is a broad form of "hot" intelligence. In their understanding of "hot" intelligences, they incorporate social, emotional, and practical intellect. Individuals with so-called "hot" intelligences interact with topics related to people (Mayer et al., 2016). Mayer et al. (2016) suggest contrasting emotional intelligence (EI) with social and personal intelligences, arguing that EI can be placed in the same category as these other "hot intelligences." It was suggested that particular types of problem-solving include the unique skills that make up emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2016).

Methodology

This study investigated whether social skill and empathy as emotional intelligence measures drive organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria, using a cross-sectional survey research approach. Ten (10) telecommunications companies in Delta State made up the study population; a sample of 123 of these companies was selected using the Yard Formulae created by Cooper and Schinder (2013) and Kothari (2014). Primary sources (structured questionnaires) were used to gather

data. Additionally, the instrument's internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach Alpha, which produced a result of 0.88, above the criterion of 0.7. Therefore, social skills, empathy, and organisational performance are all reliable. Furthermore, to ascertain the nature of the association between the independent variable (emotional intelligence variables such as social skill and empathy) and the dependent variable (organisational performance), descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The following is the multiple regression equation:

$$OP = f(EINT)$$

$$OP = f(SCS, EMP)$$

$$OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SCS + \beta_2 EMP + \epsilon$$

Where; OP is organizational performance; EINT is emotional intelligence; SCS is social skill; EMP is empathy; β_0 is intercept of regression line; β_1 - β_2 are the partial regression coefficients of independent variables while ϵ is error term.

Results

A total of one hundred and seventy-one (171) copies of the questionnaire were administered to managers and employees of ten (10) selected telecommunication firms in Delta State, specifically; **Larry Communications, JKD Unique Network Limited, Merb Resources, IDC Communication, GLO World, Gurunetwork Limited, I know Communications Limited, Ebkotel Nigeria, Visafone Communication Limited and Networking Team.** The return reveals that one hundred and twenty-three (123) 71.9% of the administered questionnaire were recovered and used for the analyses, while forty-eight (48)28.1% copies of the questionnaire representing not properly filled copies, misplaced copies and unrecovered copies of the questionnaire at time of collection were excluded from the analyses.

The 123 copies of the questionnaire received were very good and adequate for the research; for it shows that large populations of respondents were surveyed. This response was admirable and representative of the population and agrees with Cooper & Schindler (2014) condition that a response rate of 50% is sufficient for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% and above is excellent.

Table 1: Summary of total Questionnaires Administered

Total questionnaire administered	Total questionnaire administered properly filled	Total questionnaire administered not properly filled	Percentage of total questionnaire administered properly filled	Percentage of total questionnaire administered not properly filled	Total percentage
171	123	48	71.9	28.1	100

Source: Researcher's Field Study, 2025

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SCS	123	16.612	2.2045
EMP	123	16.209	2.1332
OP	123	16.432	2.5794

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the variables of interest. The result revealed that social skill (SCS) has an aggregate mean score of 16.612 and a standard deviation of 2.2045. Empathy (EMP) has an aggregate

mean score of 16.209 and a standard deviation of 2.1332. On the other hand, organizational performance (OP) has a mean score of 16.432 and a standard deviation value of 2.5794.

Table 3: Pearson Correlations

		OP	SCS	EMP
Pearson Correlation	OP	1.000		
	SCS	.554	1.000	
	EMP	.720	.571	1.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

The Pearson correlation in Table 3 showed the coefficient of type of relationship that exist between the independent variables (Social Skills (SCS), and Empathy (EMP)) and dependent variable (Organizational Performance -OP). The result from the Pearson correlation matrix revealed that Social skills (SCS) has a coefficient of ($r=0.554$)55.4%. This tells that social skills have a positive and very strong relationship with Organizational performance. This means, when there is an increase in social skills in the firms, there will a positive performance in the organization.

Furthermore, the correlation matrix again reveals that empathy (EMP) has a coefficient of ($r=0.720$)72% which reveals that empathy (EMP) has strong positive correlation with Organizational Performance (OP), this implies that an increase in empathy (EMP) would have positive effects on Organizational Performance (OP) in the selected firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Multiple Regression

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.648	1.376		1.722	.001
	SCS	.328	.033	.294	5.231	.041
	EMP	.201	.054	.194	3.759	.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

Table 4 is the multiple regression result; in order to be able to determine the significance of coefficient of independent variable in econometric model the t-statistics is computed. The calculated t for factors responsible for Social Skills (SCS) and organizational performance ($t= 5.321$, $\beta= 0.294$, $P=0.041$).This implies that there is a significant relationship between Social Skills and organizational performance of telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria. Also, calculated t for factors responsible for Empathy (EMP) and organizational performance ($t= 3.759$, $\beta= 0.194$, $P=0.000$).This implies that there is a significant relationship between Empathy and organizational performance of telecommunication firms in Delta State, Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study looked into whether social skills and empathy-two (2) indicators of emotional intelligence have an effect on the organisational performance of Nigerian telecommunication companies. In order to ascertain if social ability and empathy have an effect on the level of performance of businesses in the telecommunications sector, the study focuses on ten (10) telecommunication companies and uses a survey research design. A sample of 123 respondents, who work for specific

telecommunications companies in Delta State, Nigeria, were given a questionnaire, which served as the primary data gathering tool. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyse the acquired data. Multiple regression model results showed a significant association between organisational performance, empathy and social skills

The study comes to the conclusion that social skills and empathy, two indicators of emotional intelligence, influence how well Nigerian telecommunication companies perform. Based on the results, the study suggests that managers should maintain their social skills in order to help their subordinates contribute effectively to the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. This will help them become more self-aware, reflective, open to candid criticism, and aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. By addressing the gaps in the management literature regarding the role of social skills and empathy as indicators of emotional intelligence in influencing the performance of Nigerian telecommunication companies, the study advances our understanding of the subject.

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