An Assessment of the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Performance of Health Sector Employees in Zvimba District Hospital Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence is not a luxury, but a necessity in Zimbabwean public health institutions. The aim of the study was to determine the nexus between emotional intelligence and a performance of health sector employees in Zvimba District Hospital. The focus was on key emotional intelligence parameters on augmenting performance for the health sector. The study was guided by positivism research philosophy and anchored on Goleman's Model. A sample of 124 health professionals was selected using Raosoft sample size calculator allowing a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Quantitative data were uploaded on SPSS Version 21 and analysed using descriptive statistics and correlations. It was established from the main study findings that leaders with high emotional intelligence could inspire and motivate their teams, fostering a positive work environment that can lead to improved service delivery. It was revealed that emotional intelligence enhanced communication between healthcare providers and patients, leading to better understanding and health outcomes. This contributed to higher job satisfaction among healthcare workers, reduced turnover rates and ensuring continuity of care. The study established that resilience fostered employees to maintain professional integrity and continues to provide safe and effective care. The study recommended the need to establish support systems that promoted emotional well-being among healthcare workers. Longitudinal studies should focus on encouraging the selection of leaders with high emotional intelligence to foster a supportive work culture.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Performance; Health Sector, Decision-making, Public health

Introduction

Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognised as a critical factor in delivering patient centered care. It enhances healthcare professionals' ability to empathise with patients, communicate effectively and manage stress, which can indirectly influence patient satisfaction and outcomes (Cao et al.,2022; Deng et al.,2023). Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to understand and manage one's emotions, and to recognise and influence the emotions of others (Mapuranga et al.,2024). It encompasses several key skills such as self-awareness which is understanding your own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, goals, and their impact on others. Self-regulation is managing one's emotions effectively, controlling impulses,

adapting to change, and handling stress (Sanchez-Gomez, Sadovyy & Breso, 2021). Emotional intelligence encompass motivation as being driven to achieve goals, optimistic even in the face of failure, and having a passion for work. Empathy has a significant role to emotional intelligence as it anchors on understanding and sharing the feelings of others, putting yourself in their shoes, and showing compassion (Teame, Debie &Tullu, 2022). Lastly building rapport with others, communicating effectively, managing conflict and working well in teams cements the definition of emotional intelligence. To recapitulate, the dimension of emotional intelligence has an impact in terms of performance on hospitals as it has implications on decision making resilience and quality service delivery (Zina & Helaly,2025; Han et al.,2022). Globally emotional intelligence has been shown to directly influence the performance of health sector. For instance, research from other contexts indicates that an increase in emotional intelligence scores among managers correlates with improved performance outcomes (Li et al.,2021; Mapuranga et al.,2024; Ayed,2025). This suggests that enhancing emotional intelligence skills among health sector leaders could lead to better management and operational efficiency within health facilities. Hazan-Liran & Walter (2025) explored how peer specialists utilised emotional intelligence in their work with psychiatric patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings revealed that, despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, they drew on emotional intelligence to support both patients and staff. These qualities were found to be crucial for coping with emotional difficulties, addressing heightened stress, and promoting recovery in a time of global crisis (Hazan-Liran & Walter, 2025). Nevertheless, their study underscored the need for targeted training to enhance peer specialists' capacity in these areas, particularly during periods of heightened strain.

Li et al., (2021) assessed the relationship between emotional intelligence and job well-being in Chinese clinical nurses, multiple mediating effects of empathy and communication satisfaction. The study revealed that the nature of nursing work determines that nurses are highly emotional workers. Therefore, research on emotional intelligence has gradually entered the field of health (Chiware,2021). Good emotional intelligence helps medical staff to manage sources of situational stress, make better health decisions, reduce the effects of negative emotions, and positively affect their provision of care, as well as their physical and mental health (Chikobvu &Harunavamwe,2022). Research has shown that emotional intelligence is an important predictor of happiness, and individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence maintains a positive emotional state and a high level of happiness (Alwali & Alwali,2022).

Alwali & Alwali (2022) examined the mediating role of job satisfaction on the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among physicians in Iraq's public hospitals. Evidence from the study indicated that job satisfaction has a positive relationship with job performance. The study also provided evidence that job satisfaction plays a positive mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance. Similarly, job satisfaction has a positive mediating effect on the nexus between leadership and job performance among physicians in Iraq's public hospitals.

In South Africa, Chikobvu and Harunavamwe, (2022) carried out a study on the role of emotional intelligence and work engagement on nurses' resilience in public hospitals. It was established that emotional intelligence and work engagement, had significant relations with resilience. De Waal & Pienaar (2013) indicated that employees who are engaged are highly energetic, self-efficacious and exercise influence over events that affect their lives. The belief that they may cope with various stressors boost their confidence, which allows them to use adaptive coping strategies and endure demanding situations without being overwhelmed by the demands. Schwarzer & Warner (2013) argued that self-efficacy activates affective,

motivational and behavioural mechanisms in demanding situations, which promotes resilience. Emotionally intelligent individuals have the capacity to combat emotional experiences. This capacity to manage and regulate emotions generates continued fulfilment and capacity for positive emotions (Pidgeon et al., 2014).

The Zimbabwean public health system, like many in developing nations, faces significant challenges including resources shortages, complex health needs, historical and systemic issues (Dziva et al.,2022; Gotora,2021). Emotional intelligence is not a luxury, but a necessity in Zimbabwean public health hospitals. It is a critical tool for navigating the complex challenges of providing quality healthcare in a resource constrained environment (Chirisa et al.,2020). Through means of prioritising and fostering EI among healthcare professionals, Zimbabwean public health hospitals significantly improve patient care, staff well-being, organisational effectiveness, and ultimately contribute to better public health outcomes (Maponga et al.,2022). It requires a concerted and sustained effort, but the potential benefits are immense and essential for strengthening the Zimbabwean healthcare system and improving the lives of its people (Chiware,2021; Mukumba,2022). Resilience has become one of the most critical attributes for healthcare workers in public hospitals (Masamba et al.,2025). Resilience fosters employees to maintain professional integrity and continues to provide safe and effective care. A study conducted at Harare Central Hospital examined the relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management and leadership effectiveness among health sector leaders. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and their effectiveness in leadership roles (Mafuta, 2020; Dziva et al.,2022). Specifically, higher emotional intelligence was associated with better leadership practices, suggesting that EI is a predictor of leadership effectiveness in the medical sector (Mafuta, 2020; Gotora,2021)

A lack of equipment, supplies and limited funding remains the stumbling block to manage public health in Zvimba District Hospital. The challenge affects both patients and health staff due to long wait times and overcrowded facilities hence this has a serious health concern (Chirisa et al.,2020; Dziva et al.,2022). The ideal situation is supposed to be for health workers to provide more holistic and patient centered care (Ayed, 2025). This is because health care work in a resourced constrained environment is incredibly stressful particularly self-regulation that helps staff manage their own stress levels, cope with burnout and maintain resilience in the face of demanding conditions (Mukumba,2022; Chikobvu & Harunavamwe, 2022). Therefore, health professionals end up seeking better opportunities elsewhere and this impacts health outcomes. The study seeks to address the knowledge gap on emotional intelligence using the Zimbabwean context.

Research Methodology

The study was guided by the positivism research philosophy. One staged sampling approach was used, that is probability sampling. A Raosoft sample size calculator was used to determine the sample size from a population of 182. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from 124 health professionals in Zvimba District Hospitals. A quantitative approach with structural equation modelling was used to test the hypotheses developed. The study observed ethics at each stage of conducting this study

Results and discussion

The questionnaires were completed for 108 respondents selected in this study, constituting an 87% response rate.

Descriptive statistics
The participants responded to these questions by using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1). This standardised scale allowed for a systematic and measurable means of expressing agreement or disagreement with statements related to the construct variables. This method ensured a structured and quantifiable approach, making capturing participants' views on the variables under scrutiny easier. For each variable, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation (SD) were calculated from the responses. This analysis aimed to gain insight into the distribution patterns of the data.

EI components
Participants were asked to evaluate the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) components for public health sector employees. Table 1 summarised the descriptive statistical scores based on respondents' assessments.

Table 1: EI components descriptive statistics

Items	Mean	SD
Self-regulation and awareness	1.424	0.495
Motivation	1.720	0.450
Empathy	1.736	0.451
Social skills	1.764	0.487

The findings in Table 1 provided valuable insights into how the surveyed individuals perceive different aspects of Emotional Intelligence (EI). The mean score for self-regulation and awareness was 1.424, with a standard deviation of 0.495, indicating that respondents exhibit a certain level of self-regulation and awareness but with some variations in individual scores. Motivation emerged as another significant dimension, with a mean score of 1.720 and a relatively lower standard deviation of 0.450. This suggests a higher level of agreement among respondents regarding their motivational tendencies, indicating a more consistent perception within this EI component. Empathy, a critical component of Emotional Intelligence, demonstrated a mean score of 1.736 and a standard deviation of 0.451. This indicates a moderate level of variability in respondents' perceptions of empathy, with the mean score suggesting an overall positive evaluation of empathetic abilities among the surveyed individuals.

Lastly, social skills, with a mean score of 1.764 and a standard deviation of 0.487, showed a similar pattern of moderate variability. The scores suggest that respondents generally perceive themselves to possess reasonable social skills, although there is some diversity in individual responses. While motivation is a relatively consistent strength, self-regulation, awareness, empathy, and social skills exhibit moderate variability, highlighting individual differences in these aspects of Emotional Intelligence.

Decision-making
Recognising the impact of emotional intelligence on health sector employee’s' decision-making process within the Zvimba Hospital health sector holds significant importance. Descriptive decision-making variable statistics were calculated and outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Decision-making descriptive statistics

Items	Mean	SD
The emotional aspects significantly affect the behavior in making appropriate decisions as well as the opportunity to think clearly	1.720	0.467
Emotions play a critical role in decision-making, influencing choices, risk perceptions, and cognitive processes	1.764	0.444
An employee can identify the problem and recognise that a decision is necessary, then determine the suitable alternatives before selecting the "best" alternative and putting it into action	1.776	0.455
Decision-making abilities are improved and settled over a process of decision-making.	1.748	0.471
Healthcare leaders with high levels of EI are strong predictors of quality decision-making based on their respect for staff's work engagement level	1.788	0.419

The statistical analysis presented in Table 2 revealled that Emotional Intelligence (EI) significantly impacts decision-making as supported by Mapuranga et al., (2024). The study found that emotional aspects greatly influence the ability to make appropriate decisions and think clearly (Mean = 1.720, SD = 0.467). On average, the respondents agreed that emotional aspects played a significant role in decision-making. The standard deviation suggests that there is moderate variability in responses. The study also found that emotions were critical in decision-making, affecting choices, risk perception, and cognitive processes (Mean = 1.764, SD = 0.444). Respondents generally agreed that emotions play a critical role in decision-making. The standard deviation suggests that while there is moderate agreement, there is still some variability in responses.

Healthcare professionals, specifically nurses, could identify problems, make informed decisions, and select the best alternative available (Mean = 1.776, SD = 0.455). This suggests that nurses follow a systematic process, which has received high agreement among respondents (Li et al.,2021). The standard deviation indicates that perceptions among participants vary moderately. The decision-making process enhances and develops decision-making abilities over time (Mean = 1.748, SD = 0.471). Respondents agreed that decision-making abilities improve and settle over time. However, the standard deviation suggests moderate variability in perceptions among participants. Healthcare employees with high emotional intelligence (EI) were strong predictors of the quality decision-making of their staff's work engagement level (Mean = 1.788, SD = 0.419). Participants strongly agreed that healthcare medical staff with high EI are strong predictors of the quality decision-making of their staff's work engagement level. The lower standard deviation indicated a more consistent agreement among respondents.

Quality Service Delivery

Preliminary descriptive statistics were computed to examine potential associations between emotional intelligence and the quality-of-service delivery by health employees in the Zvimba District Hospital. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Quality service delivery descriptive statistics

Items	Mean	SD
Improves communication with people at the workplace;	1.732	0.462
An individual will feel confident and have a positive attitude and work;	1.390	0.489
Recognises individual emotional self-awareness	1.640	0.481

Helps in conflict management at the workplace	1.696	0.461
An individual will be in a position to manage change constantly	1.716	0.452
Employees will have accurate self-assessment	1.808	1.418
Improves employee's consciousness competence, including being careful, self-disciplined, and scrupulous in attending to responsibilities	1.708	0.456
Improves employee empathy competence gives people an astute awareness of others' emotions, concerns, and needs	1.651	0.478
Emotional awareness of healthcare employees is correlated with patient satisfaction	1.767	0.433
Emotional intelligence helps lower job stress and burnout levels in health employees.	1.748	0.453
Emotional control is linked to enhanced job performance by promoting behavioral flexibility and attentional control in the workplace	1.768	0.459
Individuals with greater emotional intelligence have been referred to as being more socially competent and having more quality social relationships	1.912	1.951

Table 3 presented the findings of a study on the perceptions of participants regarding emotional intelligence in the workplace. The results are in support with Chikobvu & Harunavamwe, (2022) who supported that emotional intelligence positively impacted communication, conflict management, and the ability to handle constant change. Participants agreed that emotional intelligence contributes to self-assessment, empathy, and patient satisfaction. However, there was a difference of opinion on whether emotional intelligence leads to greater confidence and a positive attitude, with some respondents expressing lower agreement. The responses related to accuracy in self-assessment were also varied. While most participants recognised the link between emotional intelligence and reduced job stress and burnout among health employees, there is no consensus on its impact on job performance. Similarly, opinions on the importance of emotional intelligence for healthcare leaders were mixed. The idea that individuals with greater emotional intelligence were more socially competent also showed a significant variation in responses. Overall, the study highlighted the complex nature of how emotional intelligence was perceived in providing quality service, with some aspects enjoying higher consensus than others.

Reliability Test

In this study, the Cronbach's alpha (CA) test was used to assess the reliability of the constructs and ensure that the measurement indicators are internally consistent. This analysis was crucial because it formed the basis for a robust examination of the relationship between emotional intelligence, innovation, decision-making and quality service delivery through correlation analysis. A high Cronbach's alpha indicated that the measurement instruments are highly reliable, contributing to subsequent correlation analyses' trustworthiness. This step was essential in establishing a solid foundation for understanding the interplay between these variables and their potential impact on job performance among health professionals in Zvimba District Hospital.

Reliability results for Emotional intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence (EI) was carefully analysed for its reliability as a crucial aspect of the research. Specific items were designed and then evaluated through a Cronbach's alpha (CA) test to determine their internal consistency and to measure the complexity of EI. Table 4 presented the reliability scores derived from 4 carefully selected items that capture the essence of the EI construct.

Table 4: Reliability results for Emotional intelligence (EI)

Cronbach's Alpha			N of Items	
0.882			3	
Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Self-regulation and Self-awareness	8.448	2.248	0.810	0.807
Motivation	8.728	1.918	0.829	0.781
Empathy	8.640	2.304	0.815	0.804

The CA test results demonstrated the strong reliability of the Emotional Intelligence (EI) measurement, with a significantly high coefficient of 0.882. This exceeded the recommended benchmark of 0.70 by Hair et al. (2019), indicating a high level of consistency among the selected EI items. The strong reliability coefficient suggested that the retained EI items effectively capture the cohesive essence of emotional intelligence, instilling confidence in the subsequent correlation analysis. This laid a solid foundation for exploring the intricate interrelationships between emotional intelligence and other variables within the nuanced landscape of job satisfaction among health professionals in the Zvimba District Hospital. It was worth noting that only two out of the four initially considered items for the EI construct have been retained, likely informed by their contribution to the observed high internal consistency. Additionally, the Corrected Item-Total Correlation values surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.30 according to Pallant's (2016) guidelines, affirming the effective measurement of the shared construct and validating the reliability and precision of the emotional intelligence measurement within the broader framework.

Table 5: Reliability results for Decision making (DM)

Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items		
0.874		5		
Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The emotional aspects significantly affect the behavior in making appropriate decisions as well as the opportunity to think clearly	7.076	2.303	0.613	0.870
Emotions play a critical role in decision-making, influencing choices, risk perceptions, and cognitive processes	7.032	2.288	0.675	0.854
Employees can identify the problem and recognise that a decision is necessary, then determine the suitable alternatives before selecting the "best" alternative and putting it into action	7.020	2.204	0.727	0.842

Decision-making abilities are improved and settled over a process of decision-making.	7.048	2.174	0.718	0.844
Healthcare employees with high levels of EI are strong predictors of quality decision-making of their respect staff's work engagement level	7.008	2.225	0.793	0.828

The results presented in Table 5 demonstrated a strong and consistent relationship among the Decision Making (DM) factors. By retaining all five items, the CA value was an impressive 0.874, exceeding the benchmark of acceptability established by Hair et al. (2019). Moreover, examining the item-total correlations for these five items reveals robust associations ranging from 0.613 to 0.793. All these correlations surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.30, providing solid evidence of the accurate measurement of the shared Decision Making (DM) construct. These findings confirmed the reliability and validity of the measurement approach, verifying the precision and consistency of the evaluation of decision-making processes among medical professionals in the context of emotional intelligence within Zvimba District Hospital.

Quality Service Delivery (QSD)

Examining the potential relationship between emotional intelligence and the Quality Service Delivery (QSD) of health employees in Zvimba District Hospital was crucial to assess the QSD construct. Table 6 provided a comprehensive overview of the reliability statistics derived from this examination.

Table 6: Reliability results for Quality service delivery (QSD)

Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items		
0.884		5		
Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Improves communication with people at the workplace;	6.440	2.633	0.609	0.884
An individual will feel confident and has a positive attitude and work;	6.784	2.692	0.716	0.877
Recognises individual emotional self-awareness	6.532	2.314	0.828	0.833
Helps in conflict management at the workplace	6.476	2.363	0.834	0.833
An individual will be in a position to manage change constantly	6.456	2.370	0.851	0.830

The Quality Service Delivery (QSD) variable analysis showed that all five items consistently contributed to a substantial CA value of 0.884. This signified a high level of reliability among the measurement items without the need to eliminate any specific item from the QSD construct. Moreover, the revised item-total correlation values for each of the five items were comfortably above the established threshold of 0.30. This implied a strong alignment between the individual items and the overall Quality Service Delivery (QSD) construct, reaffirming the efficacy of the

measurement approach. These findings bolstered the reliability and validity of the assessment, offering a solid foundation for investigating the potential relationship between emotional intelligence and the quality service delivery of health sector employees in Zvimba District Hospital.

Normality test

A normality test was conducted on all variables to ascertain the appropriateness of parametric or non-parametric hypotheses. The test investigated whether the data for the variables significantly deviated from a normal distribution. Assessing normality held significance in choosing the most appropriate statistical analyses, guaranteeing the precision of subsequent inferential procedures. The comprehensive results of this analysis were detailed in Table 7, offering a thorough comprehension of the obtained outcomes.

Table 7: Normality test results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
EI	0.448	250.000	0.000
DM	0.280	250.000	0.000
QSD	0.269	250.000	0.000

According to the presented results, all computed p-values fell below the predetermined threshold of 0.05. This suggested non-normality in the data, leading to rejecting the null hypothesis. In essence, the data about the variables manifested notable deviations from a normal distribution.

Common method bias (CMB)

Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were employed for each latent variable to assess the potential impact of standard method bias (CMB). VIF was a metric to measure the extent of multicollinearity among predictor variables within a regression model. Following the criteria established by Hair et al. (2014), a widely acknowledged threshold for VIF was set at 5. Values exceeding this threshold suggest considerable multicollinearity among predictor variables in either regression or structural equation models. The detailed collinearity statistics, as indicated by the VIF values, were meticulously presented in Table 8.

Table 8: The variance inflation factors (VIFs)

Construct	EI	DM	QSD
VIF	2.647	3.104	2.119

The findings compellingly affirm the absence of collinearity and any potential for Common Method Bias (CMB) as portrayed in Table 8. Significantly, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values consistently and confidently stayed below the widely recognised threshold of 5.0, aligning seamlessly with the established criteria elucidated by Hair et al. (2014). This conclusive observation provided a robust and verifiable assurance that multicollinearity is not a cause for concern within this study's confines, reinforcing the analytical structure's integrity and dependability.

Table 9: SEM path coefficients.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	SE	T statistic	P-values	Decision
H_1	EI→DM	0.117	0.052	2.229	0.026	Supported
H_2	EI→QSD	0.132	0.033	3.984	<0.001	Supported

The outcomes outlined in Table 9, underscored a notable and statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and decision-making (DM) among health professionals within the Zvimba District Hospital ($\beta = 0.117$, $t = 2.229$, $p = 0.026$). These results indicated a positive influence, signifying that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with enhanced decision-making capabilities among health professionals in Zvimba District Hospital. The results suggested that cultivating emotional intelligence may serve as a catalyst for more effective decision-making processes within public health's complex and critical domain (Khademi et al.,2021; Mapuranga et al.,2024). The statistically significant association prompted a deeper exploration into the specific dimensions of emotional intelligence that contribute to improved decision-making among health professionals. These findings held implications for both academic discourse and practical applications within the public health sector, emphasising the need for interventions and training programmes to enhance emotional intelligence among healthcare professionals to bolster their decision-making prowess.

Furthermore, the study's findings underscored a substantial and statistically significant impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on the quality service delivery (QSD) of health professionals in Zvimba District Hospital ($\beta = 0.132$, $t = 3.984$, $p < 0.001$). These results emphasised a positive association, indicating that higher levels of emotional intelligence among health employees are linked to an enhanced capacity for delivering quality services within the public health sector. The results implied that fostering emotional intelligence may be a strategic avenue for improving the overall standard of healthcare services (Jimenez-Picon et al.,2021). It stressed the potential impact of emotional intelligence on individual practitioners and the collective quality of healthcare delivery in the public sector. This recognition of the positive and influential role of emotional intelligence bore implications for shaping training programmes and interventions tailored to enhance emotional intelligence among health professionals, thereby elevating service delivery standards in Zvimba District Hospital.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that health sector organisations in Zimbabwe invest in training programmes aimed at developing emotional intelligence skills among their leaders and managers. This could involve workshops and seminars focused on enhancing self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills, which are crucial for effective leadership and improved performance in healthcare settings. The evidence suggested that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in the performance of the Zvimba District Hospital, particularly in enhancing leadership effectiveness. Through fostering emotional intelligence among health managers, organisations could potentially improve their operational outcomes and the quality of healthcare delivery.

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