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## Emotional Intelligence and Employee Retention in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Industry in South-western Nigeria

**Dr. Tejumade O. Siyanbola**

Associate Professor, Department of Management and Accounting,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

**Raphael O. Ajimotokin**

Graduate Researcher, Department of Management and Accounting,  
Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

*This paper examined the connection between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and retention of employees in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco industry located in Southwestern Nigeria with the specific objectives of assessing the level of emotional intelligence present within the industry and the extent to which EI influences the businesses' ability to retain their employees. Quantitative data was collected through a survey questionnaire from 297 employees of five of the top listed companies in the sampled industry based on their net worth. The data collected through the stratified sampling technique was analysed using both descriptive (percentages, arithmetic mean, correlation, etc.) and inferential (linear and multiple regression) statistical analyses. Results showed that EI explained approximately 58% of the level of retention in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco industry with Adjusted  $R^2 = .577$ . In addition, Emotional Intelligence is measured by self-motivation (e.g. ability to prioritise activities), self-control (e.g. ability to suppress emotions), self-awareness (e.g. being able to quickly manage anger), social skills (e.g. capability to reconcile differences with colleagues), and empathy (e.g. understanding other persons' viewpoints) are all commonplace in the industry. With regards to the influence Emotional Intelligence has on employee retention in the Food, Beverages and Tobacco industry, all measures were significant, either positively or negatively, in the following descending order: self-control ( $t = 10.79, p < 0.05$ ), ability to read emotions ( $t = 9.17, p < 0.05$ ), self-motivation ( $t = 7.55, p < 0.05$ ), social skills ( $t = -4.44, p < 0.05$ ), and self-awareness ( $t = 3.83, p < 0.05$ ). To conclude, the study found that when employees in the food, beverage, and tobacco industries are emotionally intelligent, the retention rate among them is higher than otherwise.*

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, employee retention, food, beverage and tobacco industry, South-western Nigeria

### **1. Introduction**

Bru-Luna et al. (2021, p. 1) define emotional intelligence as "...the ability to perceive, express, understand, and manage emotions." The authors further opined that professionals with effective EI may be protected against the emotional burden that could be associated with particular professions. Emotional intelligence (EI) is also defined as a person's "...capacity to process emotional information accurately and efficiently, including that information relevant to the recognition, construction, and regulation of emotion in oneself and others" (Mayer & Salovey, 1995, p.197). Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey and Palfai (1995) describe EI as a measure of people's individual differences in the manner in which one is able to reflect on one's emotions and manage the same. The authors in the same research describe emotionally intelligent people as those capable of regulating their emotions logically and consistently. The emotional information processed by that person is believed to send a message about the knowledge of the person's connection to other people. In Sony and Mekoth's description of EI, it is:

*"...a set of interrelated skills concerning the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (2016, p. 22)*

At the individual level, EI is viewed as an aspect of social intelligence that assists someone in assessing and monitoring his/her own and other people's feelings and emotions, distinguishing them, and applying the information gathered to guide your own thoughts and actions for rational decision making (Salovey et al., 1995). In simple terms, it is an individual's ability to handle one's personal issues while also guarding other persons' emotions. Konye, Solomon, Hamilton, and Ogbor (2017) view EI as the capability to exhibit a perception and identify your emotions and those of others, then assess, manage, and control them for the benefit of all concerned.

Nelson and Low (2011) portend that with regards to a person, EI is the solitary most crucial influencer of such a person's personal achievement, leadership capabilities, success in career and satisfaction with life issues. The authors believe EI can be learnt through an experience-based approach to achieve certain skill sets, behaviours, beliefs, norms, and attitudes. With this description of EI by Nelson and Low, the connection made between EI and leadership capabilities on the one hand and EI and a successful career on the other is an indication that organisations' managers with high emotional intelligence may be able to curtail incessant exits of their employees and make higher retention possible.

Mohamad and Jais (2016), in their study, found a significant link between EI and job satisfaction. These authors identified self-regulation (self-management) as an important attribute of an emotionally intelligent individual. Moreover, Mohamad and Jais corroborate other authors by highlighting the significance of self-awareness, self-motivation, relationship management (social skills) and job performance in someone with adequate EI. This result further strengthens the argument that a manager's EI would likely be connected to his/her potential to prevent unwanted exits, particularly of valued employees, from the organisation.

From all the definitions and descriptions, it is apparent that although being intelligent emotionally is beneficial to human race and our workplace, it is not enough to manage and control personal emotions and feelings, it is mutually beneficial to have the mindset and actively assist other people to regulate theirs too.

With regards to employee retention (E-Retention), it is commonly acknowledged that the management of contemporary organisations has a duty to hire appropriate employees who are capable of helping to develop, sustain, and move the businesses forward. However, management's inability to persuade those employees, especially the valuable ones, indicates an incomplete process in the absence of adequate retention. Although E-retention and Employee Turnover (E-Turnover) may both present a form of an oxymoron, it has been argued that lack of, or very low level of, the latter is not healthy for an organisation due to potentially higher retention costs (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003), and moderate employee exits are essential for the health of businesses and "...optimal turnover rate..." (Siyanbola & Gilman, 2017), active retention is equally important for business's stability; so there are always unintended consequences from tackling either of them.

Employee retention is defined as the process of encouraging employees to remain with an organisation for the maximum period (Das and Baruah, 2013) or for as long as possible. Mehta, Kurbetti, and Dhankar (2014) view retention as a technique that business organisations adopt to maintain an active workforce that would allow management to meet the broad objectives of their businesses, their obligations, and operations. Many factors impact employee retention in business organisations; some of these, as discovered in a sample of service industry employees in Pakistan, are supervisor support, career development, rewards and recognition, work environment, job satisfaction and work-life balance (Nasir & Mahmood, 2016). In essence, the results point to a reduced employee turnover rate when employees and their supervisor have a good working relationship, perceive that they would be able to develop their careers, are given adequate rewards and recognition as and when due, enjoy a balanced working life, and conducive work environment, etc.

Similarly, Kossivi, Xu and Kalgora (2016) identify development opportunities, compensation, work-life balance, leadership, work environment, social support, autonomy and training and development as key determinants in employees' decision to stay in organisations. The differences in these authors' determinants of employees' long length of service compared to Nasir and Mahmood (2016) are leadership styles of managers, appropriate social support mechanisms, employees being allowed to be independent and training plus development. Experience shows that when some of these are in place, workers are more likely than never to have the inclination to stay with such organisations as they compare their situations with their peers/friends in other companies.

The significance of employee retention research is corroborated by the results from similar studies on employee turnover (E-Turnover) rate in businesses the world over, but particularly on the high rate of attrition in Nigerian businesses. Siyanbola (2013) and Ihua (2010) report a high incidence of E-Turnover in their separate studies on SMEs in Nigeria. This means that the need for studies on employee exits or retention rates in businesses is still as essential in today's 21<sup>st</sup>-century organisations as they have always been to allow for a better comprehension of why, how and the extent of attrition occurrence, such that solutions to the incessant human resource issues could be focused on. In a related study, "...E-turnover still pervades the Nigerian SMEs surveyed with most employees leaving their jobs in less than a year of employment. Multiple exits also occurred; additionally, employees were more prone to exiting if they...worked in the manufacturing rather than service SMEs" (Siyanbola & Gilman, 2017, p. 967). The authors report that most employees exit within a year of joining an organisation is problematic for all stakeholders of such businesses; high E-Turnover of employees could potentially destabilise the workings of a business to the extent that it could go into extinct. Siyanbola and Gilman also report that the attrition rate is much higher in the manufacturing than it is in the service sector. By implication, companies in the food, beverage, and tobacco (FBT) manufacturing industry are more prone to lower retention rates than otherwise.

Therefore, based on the reported low level of employee retention in businesses, particularly in Nigeria, this paper investigated the nexus between the rate at which management of businesses in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco companies in Nigeria retain their employees and the level of Emotional Intelligence in such companies.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

The central objective of this paper was to evaluate the impact that Emotional Intelligence has on the retention of employees from the Food, Beverage, and Tobacco (FBT) industry in Nigeria. In addition, at the initial stage, the research sought to assess the level of E-Intelligence occurring in the businesses covered in the research presented in this paper. Investigating the latter objective was critical to allow for an exhaustive comprehension of the Independent Variables of interest.

### 1.2. Conceptual Foundation for the Paper

The constructs adopted for measuring emotional intelligence were based mainly on Goleman's (2018) components of a good leader with appropriate emotional intelligence for business organisations' success. The constructs are *self-awareness, self-regulation/self-control, self-motivation, empathy and social skills*. However, there are other researchers who also applied some of the constructs in their studies; an example is Dulewicz and Higgs (1999), who adopted *self-awareness and motivation*. In essence, there are commonalities in the usage of some of the constructs adopted to measure E-Intelligence in this research, so precedence already exists for the application of the approach adopted in this paper. The extent to which the EI of a manager is of value to a business organisation is reflected by Goleman's (2018) submission in the author's conceptualisation of a leader in the following quotes: "*IQ and technical skills are important, but emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership*" (p.1). Goleman recognises that although other qualities and skills of a manager are important for successfully maintaining an organisation, EI is absolutely essential for high-level managerial success irrespective of the organisation's size, but even more imperative for medium to large business establishments.

## 2. Methodology

The study reported in this research adopted a quantitative design aided by a structured survey questionnaire for data collection. The study data was collected from 297 employees (about 74% of the 400 sent out) of five of the top listed companies in the sampled industry, and between them, there was a population of about 16,294. The companies were: Nigerian Breweries PLC (NB), Nestle Nigeria PLC, British American Tobacco Nigeria PLC, Flour Mills of Nigeria PLC, and Cadbury Nigeria PLC; the selection of the companies was based on their net-worth. The data was collected through purposive and stratified sampling techniques; the purposiveness arose from the choice of companies listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange based on their being regarded as valuable. Stratification into food, beverage, and tobacco was carried out to promote proper representation. The data was analysed using both descriptive (percentages, arithmetic mean, correlation, etc.) and inferential (multiple regression) statistical analyses.

## 3. Results and Interpretation

At the onset of analysing the data, the 22 items on the questionnaire were analysed for internal consistency with reference to the items measuring each of the two variables in the research: thirteen items for emotional intelligence (independent variable) and nine items for employee retention (dependent variable). The output, as shown in table 1, indicates that items that measure employee retention had an average of .824 Cronbach alpha coefficient, satisfying the minimum required [.7]) as espoused by George and Mallery (2019), while the average for those measuring emotional intelligence were lower than the standard at .665. However, not meeting the .7 cut does not necessarily mean throwing the data away, as various issues, such as few items in the instrument or fewer variables, maybe the cause of the low coefficient (Helms, Henze, Sass, & Mifsud, 2006). Hence, it has been argued that getting rid of data for such reasons is wasteful (Helms et al., 2006; Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2002), so the data was retained after careful consideration and used for further analysis.

Questionnaire Items	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
Level of Emotional Intelligence	13	.665
Level of Employee Retention	09	.824

Table 1: Reliability Statistics for Emotional Intelligence Level and Employee Retention  
Source: Field Survey, 2024

### 3.1. Level of Emotional Intelligence in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco (FBT) Manufacturing Industry

As previously indicated in the definition and description of emotional intelligence (EI), the concept was measured based on Goleman's (2018) components of EI, which are explained in the conceptual foundation section. Each measure was further broken down into smaller constructs of between two and three, making it easier to comprehend each minutiae aspect of EI as a broader construct. For emphasis, EI was measured by Goleman as *self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills*. From the breakdowns of each main construct, as in table 2, the sample mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) was used to differentiate between the smaller construct that measured the bigger. As it will be the standard procedure, a bigger  $\bar{x}$  indicates closeness to the average mean, and in that case, it is more representative of the group.

Therefore, for *self-awareness*, respondents believe that the ability to '*let go of anger*' in them would mean that such circumstances would not define them as people; others in this category that are not as important are realisation when one loses temper and awareness of one's own personal emotions. In this category, the manager necessarily needs to release any anger building up in him/her to ensure the effects do not impact the person's ability to manage successfully. In terms of *self-control*, the '*capability to suppress emotions when need be*' was reported as what self-control is about; arguably, such an attribute could potentially assist a leader or any person a long way. With regards to *self-motivation*, the ability to prioritise important activities at any time and get on with managing the organisation, with a mean of 3.66, appeared to be more important to the respondents than any other consideration in that category. As for *empathy*, the ability and efforts made to see things from other people's perspectives were more significant than other issues. *The social skills* of a manager play a major role in their life, and the ability to reconcile issues at a mean of 3.66 appeared to play a significant role in effective management.

Emotional Intelligence Constructs	FREQUENCY (%)					Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Ranking
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly				
<b>Self-Awareness</b>									
I realise immediately when I lose my temper.	8 (2.7%)	83 (27.9%)	7 (2.4%)	123 (41.4%)	76 (25.6%)	3.59	0.071	1.216	2nd
Awareness of my own emotions is very important to me at all times.	15 (5.0%)	98 (33%)		116 (39.1%)	68 (22.9%)	3.42	0.075	1.292	3rd
I can let anger 'go' quickly so that it no longer affects me.		70 (23.6%)		188 (63.3%)	39 (13.1%)	3.66	0.057	0.981	1st
<b>Self-Control</b>									
Others can rarely tell what kind of mood I am in.		97 (32.7%)		139 (46.8%)	61 (20.5%)	3.55	0.067	1.147	2nd
I can suppress my emotions when I need to.	8 (2.7%)	83 (27.9%)	7 (2.4%)	123 (41.4%)	76 (25.6%)	3.59	0.071	1.216	1st
<b>Self-Motivation</b>									
I am usually able to prioritise important activities at work and get on with them.		70 (23.6%)		188 (63.3%)	39 (13.1%)	3.66	0.057	0.981	1st
Motivation has been the key to my success.		97 (32.7%)		139 (46.8%)	61 (20.5%)	3.55	0.067	1.147	2nd
<b>Empathy</b>									
I can tell if someone is not happy with me.		122 (41.1%)		175 (58.9%)		3.18	0.057	0.986	2nd
I can sometimes see things from others' point of view.	39 (13.1%)	62 (20.9%)	15 (5.1%)	150 (50.5%)	31 (10.4%)	3.24	0.073	1.266	1st
Reasons for disagreements are always clear to me.	38 (12.8%)	97 (32.7%)	20 (6.7%)	127 (42.7%)	15 (5.1%)	2.95	0.07	1.212	3rd
<b>Social Skills</b>									
I am good at adapting and mixing with a variety of people.	3 (1%)	99 (33.3%)	0	141 (47.5%)	54 (18.2%)	3.48	0.067	1.16	2nd
I need a variety of work colleagues to make my job interesting.	6 (2%)	92(31%)	19 (6.4%)	140 (47.1%)	40 (13.5%)	3.39	0.065	1.119	3rd
I am good at reconciling differences with other people.	0	70 (23.6%)	0	188 (63.3%)	39 (13.1%)	3.66	0.057	0.981	1st

Table 2: Level of Emotional Intelligence in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Industry in South-western Nigeria  
Source: Field Study, 2024

### 3.2. Correlation of Original Variables and Multicollinearity

At the start of data analysis, the correlation level between the original independent variables was calculated, and it was discovered that the correlation coefficients between some of them were quite high, causing multicollinearity issues with potential noise within the model. In order to reduce the problems, the data was cleaned further by removing some of the items with high correlation prior to further analysis. In the case of two items being highly correlated, one of them was removed from the model as an indication that the remaining item became a representative of the removed item.

Additionally, *Tolerance* and *Variance Inflation Index (VIF)* were calculated to further test for collinearity issues between the independent variables. Tolerance explains the percentage of the variance in a predictor that cannot be accounted for by the other predictors, while VIF is calculated by dividing 1 by the tolerance value (UCLA, 2021). Results in table 4 show that none of the tolerance figures for all the remaining constructs (IVs) was less than the 0.1, the minimum generally allowed for inclusion in the model for inferential analysis, so each of them was strong enough to be included in the regression model (the lowest was 0.552). As for VIFs, all of them were less than 10, which is universally accepted for items inclusion in the model for further analysis (the highest VIF was 1.813).

### 3.3. Results of the Regression Analysis on the Nexus between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Retention

This section presents the results of the tested research hypothesis and the disaggregated effects of each of the independent variables measuring EI on the dependent variable (employee retention).

#### 3.3.1. Test of Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this research is stated as follows:



- $H_01$ : There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and employees' retention in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Industry in Southwestern Nigeria

In testing the hypothesis, a simple linear regression (table 3) was carried out together with analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the relationship between EI and Employee retention was significant ( $F = 81.848$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the result showed that 94.27 of the total variation of 226.84 in employees' retention resulted from the changes in the predictors.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	132.569	5	26.514	81.848	.000 <sup>e</sup>
Residual	94.266	291	.324		
Total	226.835	296			

Table 3: ANOVA for Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Employees' Retention in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Industry in South-western Nigeria  
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 presents the disaggregated effects of each of the predictors on the criterion variable. Overall, and for the whole model, the *Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>* of .577 corroborated the results in the previous section. It means that approximately 58% of the variations that occurred in the criterion variable (*employee retention*) were accounted for by the presence of the predictors in the model, representing EI.

Also, with regards to the significance of the remaining five individual predictors in the final Regression model, all were significant at  $p < 0.05$  in the following *descending order* of importance based on their *Beta Coefficient*: *Self-Control*: Inability of other people to decode mood swings ( $\beta = .636$ ), *Empathy*: Being able to understand why other people are unhappy with you ( $\beta = .540$ ), *Self-Motivation*: Ability to prioritise key activities and go along with them, even at difficult periods ( $\beta = .520$ ), *Social Skills*: Able to reconcile differences with others in a timely manner ( $\beta = -.460$ ) and *Self Awareness*: Can let go of anger quickly, so it does not affect my decisions ( $\beta = .422$ ).

By interpretation, the finding revealed that where any of the managers of the Food, Beverage and Tobacco businesses are able to maintain self-control, have empathy, be self-motivated, self-aware and possess social skills, there is likely to be an improvement in employee retention, resulting in employees with longer tenure. This has the potential to create sustenance in the supply of organisational human resources, maintaining stability, thus making the business more viable and sustained for the foreseeable future.

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		Beta Ranking
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
(Constant)	1.849	0.451		4.096	.000			
I can let anger 'go' quickly so that it no longer affects me and my decision to remain in my organisation.	0.422	0.110	0.218	3.832	.000	1.000	1.000	4th
Others can rarely tell what kind of mood I am in, and this has helped me to remain in my organisation.	0.636	0.059	0.528	10.787	.000	0.969	1.032	1st
I am usually able to prioritise important activities at work and get on with them, and this has helped me to remain in my organisation.	0.520	0.069	0.400	7.545	.000	0.693	1.443	3rd
I can tell if someone is not happy with me, and this has informed my decision to remain in my organisation.	0.540	0.059	0.472	9.166	.000	0.574	1.743	2nd
My ability to reconcile differences with other people has made me choose to stay in my organisation.	-0.460	.103	-0.226	-4.442	.000	0.552	1.813	5th
R	0.764							
R Square	0.584							
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.577							
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.569							
R Square Change	0.028							
Durbin-Watson	1.345							

Table 4: Regression Results on the Effects of Emotional Intelligence on Employees' Retention in the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Industry in South-western Nigeria  
Source: Field Survey, 2024

#### 4. Conclusion

The study concluded that when employees in the food, beverage, and tobacco industries are emotionally intelligent, the retention rate among them is higher than otherwise. The results signaled a strong influence of a manager's/supervisor's Emotional Intelligence (EI) on employees' decision to stay in jobs with their organisations. More specifically, five measures of EI in the following order of the most significant first impacted employees' decisions on whether to stay in their jobs or not: *self-control, empathy, self-motivation, social skills and self-awareness*. The implication here is that the management/owners of the businesses sampled need to pay rapt attention to those areas of their managers' existence to assist them in optimising so that the potentially positive effects of such ripples could move the businesses to higher cost-effectiveness.

#### 5. Suggestions for Future Research

The study was carried out in the southwestern zone of the country, and this is only one of the six zones that the Nigerian state is divided into. Therefore, the fact that there are still five zones not covered by this research serves as a limitation, not only in terms of coverage but also prevents over-generalisation of the results. With this limitation, there is room for future studies covering a larger section of the country, particularly where bigger studies are necessary.

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