

Relationship Between Leaders' Emotional Intelligence and Their Employees' Job Satisfaction: A Case of the Transport and Logistics Sector in Zambia

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence (EI) and employees' job satisfaction within the transport and logistics sector in Zambia, a multinational logistics provider operating in Lusaka. Leadership in logistics requires managing diverse teams under high operational pressure, making EI a critical competency. A parallel convergent design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitatively, a census survey included all employees at the transport and logistics sector in Zambia's Lusaka branch (N = 46), with leaders (n = 10) completing the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form and employees completing the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire–Short Form. Qualitatively, focus group discussions explored employees' perceptions of leadership behavior and satisfaction. Results indicated that leaders scored high in EI, particularly in emotionality and sociability dimensions. Employees reported moderate job satisfaction, with intrinsic satisfaction slightly higher than extrinsic satisfaction. Correlational analysis revealed a strong, significant positive relationship between leaders' EI and employee satisfaction ($r = .670, p < .001$). Regression analysis confirmed EI as the strongest predictor of satisfaction, even after controlling for age and tenure. The findings support the hypothesis that emotionally intelligent leadership enhances employee satisfaction in logistics organizations. Practically, the study recommends EI training programs, improved communication and recognition strategies, workload management, and employee development initiatives to strengthen satisfaction and retention. Theoretically, the study extends EI frameworks to African organizational contexts, offering evidence that emotional competencies are pivotal for leadership effectiveness in high-stakes service industries.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Leadership, Job satisfaction, Logistics, Zambia

1. Introduction

1.1 Importance of the Problem

Leadership effectiveness has long been linked to organizational performance, yet the determinants of successful leadership remain complex, particularly in developing economies and

high-pressure industries such as logistics (Gooty et al., 2010; Aksoy, & Adiguzel, 2026). Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical construct in explaining workplace outcomes, with evidence showing that emotionally intelligent leaders foster higher productivity, lower turnover, and stronger team cohesion (Coronado-Maldonado, & Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Chakkaravarthy, & Bhaumik, 2025). In Zambia, where employment growth has not been matched by institutional coordination and workplace satisfaction (Sishuwa, & Phiri, 2020; Banda, 2019 2024; Mweetwa, & Chipindi, 2025), the logistics sector faces unique challenges that demand emotionally intelligent leadership.

1.2 Relevance to Previous Work

Research at global scale consistently demonstrate that EI predicts employee satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and organizational performance (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2016; Alwali, & Alwali, 2022). Antonopoulou, (2024) framework highlights emotional self-awareness and regulation as essential leadership competencies. Empirical studies confirm that emotionally intelligent leaders enhance collaboration, problem-solving, and resilience under pressure (Shandilya, & Bansal, 2025; Singh, & Singh, 2025; Boyatzis, 2018). African organizational studies further reveal that insufficient EI contributes to workplace dysfunction, diminished productivity, and leadership failures (Mbili, 2020; Matjie, 2023). However, despite these findings, little empirical evidence exists on how EI influences leadership effectiveness in Zambia's logistics sector, particularly within multinational organizations such as the transport and logistics sector in Zambia.

1.3 Research Gap and Contribution

While international studies report strong correlations between EI and workplace outcomes (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017; Dođru, 2022), these findings lack contextual validation in Zambia. the transport and logistics sector in Zambia, with its diverse workforce and operational pressures, provides a strategic case study for examining how leaders' emotionally intelligent behavior affects employee job satisfaction. This study contributes to cumulative scholarship by extending EI theory to African logistics contexts and addressing practical leadership challenges in Zambia.

1.4 Hypotheses and Research Design

The study hypothesized that leaders' emotionally intelligent behavior is positively associated with employee job satisfaction at the transport and logistics sector in Zambia. The primary objective is to investigate this relationship, while secondary objectives include: Assessing leaders' EI levels, measuring employee job satisfaction, exploring the relationship between leaders' EI and job satisfaction and identifying strategies to enhance satisfaction.

These hypotheses are grounded in EI theory (Goleman, 2012) and prior empirical findings (Miao et al., 2017; Schutte & Malouff, 2011). The research design employs validated psychometric scales and job satisfaction surveys, enabling systematic examination of these relationships.

1.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study extends emotional intelligence frameworks to African organizational contexts, contributing to the global discourse on leadership and workplace outcomes. Practically, it offers the transport and logistics sector in Zambia and similar organizations evidence-based strategies for leadership development, employee retention, and organizational culture enhancement. By bridging global evidence with local realities, the study provides actionable insights for sustaining competitiveness in Zambia's logistics sector.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The study population comprised employees of the transport and logistics sector in Zambia, specifically those working in Lusaka Province across administrative offices and service centres. Participants included senior management, middle management, and frontline staff from departments such as operations, customer service, finance, and administration. Eligibility criteria required participants to be full-time employees with at least six months of tenure to ensure familiarity with organizational culture and leadership practices. Exclusion criteria included temporary staff and interns, as their limited tenure could bias perceptions of leadership and job satisfaction.

2.2 Sample Size and sampling technique

Because the population was small, the study adopted a census sampling technique in which all employees were included in the investigation rather than selecting a subset sample (Kothari, 2004). This approach was appropriate as the population size was manageable, allowing for full coverage of respondents without logistical constraints. It also eliminated sampling error and ensured that all employees' perceptions and experiences were captured, thereby improving the reliability and completeness of the findings. Furthermore, the small population made the use of statistical sampling unnecessary. The target population was divided into two groups: leaders (n = 10), who were assessed for emotional intelligence using the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form (TEIQue-SF), and all employees (n = 46), who were assessed for job satisfaction using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire–Short Form (MSQ-SF). This structure enabled a comprehensive assessment of emotional intelligence among leaders while simultaneously evaluating job satisfaction across the entire workforce, including comparative insights between leaders and subordinates.

2.2.1 Measures and Covariates

Two primary constructs were measured: leaders' emotional intelligence and employees' job satisfaction. Leaders' EI was assessed using the *Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)*, a validated self-report instrument measuring four dimensions: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion (Wong & Law, 2002). The WLEIS has demonstrated strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$ (Cronbach, 1951) and cross-cultural validity (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004).

Employee job satisfaction was measured using the *Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)* short form, which evaluates intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction dimensions (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967). The MSQ has been widely validated, with reliability coefficients exceeding .80 across diverse organizational contexts. Covariates included demographic variables (age, gender, tenure, and department) to control for potential confounding effects.

2.3 Research Design

The study employed a parallel convergent mixed-methods approach, which helps to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously in the same period of the research process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The rationale of this design was that it enabled effective data collection within the operational bounds of the selected organisation; in addition to the quantitative and qualitative results to be compared and incorporated to provide a complete picture of the research problem (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

2.4 Data collection Procedures

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the research variables. Quantitatively, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Short Form (TEIQue-SF) was used to measure leaders' emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2006). This 30-item psychometric scale assessed four dimensions—well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability—using a 7-point Likert scale and was selected due to its strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$) and validated use in organisational contexts (Cooper & Petrides, 2010). In addition, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire–Short Form (MSQ-SF) was used to measure employee job satisfaction (Weiss et al., 1967). This 20-item instrument assessed intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale and was adopted for its strong psychometric properties ($\alpha = 0.87$) and wide application in workplace studies (Hirschfeld, 2000). Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions, which explored employees' perceptions of leaders' emotional intelligence and its influence on job satisfaction. This method was appropriate for generating in-depth, shared insights and understanding contextual factors affecting the relationship between the study variables (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020). Informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was maintained, and participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. Ethical clearance was granted by the University of Lusaka institutional review board, and then permission was obtained from the transport and logistics sector management teams in Zambia.

3. Results

3.1 Recruitment

Data collection was conducted between June and August 2025 at transport and logistics sector in Zambia’s operations. A total of 56 employees were approached, and 56 consented to participate (response rate = 100 %). All participants completed the survey instruments, and no cases were excluded due to incomplete data.

3.2 Baseline Sociodemographic Characteristics

Table 1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 56).

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	32	57.1
	Female	24	42.9
Age Distribution	20–29 years	15	26.8
	30–39 years	21	37.5
	40–49 years	13	23.2
	50+ years	7	12.5
Educational Qualification	Diploma/Certificate	16	28.6
	Bachelor’s Degree	27	48.2
	Master’s Degree	11	19.6
	Doctorate	2	3.6
Departmental Distribution	Operations	17	30.4
	Sales & Commercial	12	21.4
	Customer Service	14	25.0
	Finance	3	5.4
	Management/Leadership	10	17.9
Length of Service	< 1 year	4	7.1
	1–3 years	18	32.1
	4–6 years	17	30.4
	7–10 years	9	16.1
	10+ years	8	14.3
Total		56	100

Note. Percentages are based on valid responses. Minor rounding differences may occur.

The demographic profile of respondents indicates a relatively balanced and diverse workforce. The majority of respondents are male (57.1%) while females constitute 42.9%, showing moderate gender representation. In terms of age, most employees are within the 30–39 years

category (37.5%), followed by 20–29 years (26.8%), suggesting a predominantly young to middle-aged workforce. Educational attainment is generally high, with most respondents holding a bachelor’s degree (48.2%), indicating a skilled workforce. Departmentally, respondents are fairly distributed across key functional areas, with Operations having the highest representation (30.4%). Regarding tenure, most employees have worked between 1–6 years (62.5%), reflecting a moderately experienced workforce with a reasonable level of organisational exposure.

3.3 Descriptive statistical findings

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of leaders’ emotional intelligence scores (means, SDs, reliability indices).

EI Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Well-being	4.978	0.410	4.458	5.495
Self-control	4.930	0.496	4.091	5.802
Emotionality	5.116	0.415	4.549	5.771
Sociability	5.003	0.430	4.449	5.727
Global Trait EI	5.007	0.410	4.464	5.701

Leaders in the transport and logistics sector in Zambia demonstrated consistently high emotional intelligence across all dimensions, with mean scores above 4.9 on a 7-point scale. Emotionality and sociability were particularly strong, suggesting leaders are adept at recognizing emotions and fostering interpersonal relationships. The relatively lower variability (small standard deviations) indicates a stable and uniform EI profile among leaders, which strengthens confidence in the reliability of these measures.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of employee job satisfaction scores (means, SDs, reliability indices).

Job Dimension	Satisfaction	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Intrinsic satisfaction		3.455	0.481	2.333	4.667
Extrinsic satisfaction		3.402	0.575	2.375	4.625
Overall job satisfaction		3.434	0.493	2.350	4.650

Employee job satisfaction levels were moderate, with overall satisfaction averaging 3.43 on a 5-point scale. Intrinsic satisfaction (linked to personal fulfillment and meaningful work) was slightly higher than extrinsic satisfaction (linked to pay and external rewards). This pattern suggests that employees derive more satisfaction from the nature of their work than from external conditions, highlighting areas where leadership interventions could enhance extrinsic factors.

The distribution of employee job satisfaction in the transport and logistics sector in Zambia indicates that the majority of employees report moderate to high satisfaction levels, with 46.43% falling in the moderate range (3.0–3.5) and 41.07% in the high range (>3.5). A smaller proportion of employees (12.5%) report low satisfaction (<3.0), suggesting that overall, most employees experience a satisfactory level of job contentment.

3.3 Qualitative Insights on Job Satisfaction

Focus group discussions revealed nuanced experiences underpinning the quantitative satisfaction scores. Four themes emerged: including Strong satisfaction with teamwork and organizational reputation, Concerns about workload and work–life balance, Mixed views on recognition and career growth and Relatively positive views on job security and benefits

Many participants expressed pride in working for the transport and logistics sector in as a globally recognized logistics brand and valued the teamwork within their units:

“We feel proud when customers recognize our company. Working in such a brand motivates us because we know we are part of something big.” (FG2-P2)

Operational staff, in particular, highlighted heavy workloads and long hours during peak seasons as sources of strain that reduce job satisfaction:

“When volumes are high, we work late almost every day. It becomes difficult to balance with family responsibilities.” (FG1-P4)

Some employees felt fairly recognized through performance appraisals and informal appreciation, while others reported limited feedback and unclear promotion pathways:

“At times our supervisor appreciates us in meetings, but formal recognition like promotions is slow. People can stay at the same level for many years.” (FG1-P7)

Participants generally perceived the transport and logistics sector as offering better job security and benefits compared to many other employers in Zambia, which contributed positively to satisfaction:

“Compared to other companies in the transport and logistics sector, our company (name withheld) is more stable. You know your salary will come, and they follow policies.” (FG2-P6)

Taken together, the qualitative evidence supports the quantitative conclusion that employees are broadly satisfied, particularly with teamwork, organizational reputation, and job security, but less satisfied with workload, feedback, and growth opportunities.

3.4 Relationship between EI and Job Satisfaction

Table 4: Correlation matrix between leaders’ EI dimensions and employee job satisfaction.

Variables	Leader (Global) EI	Overall Job Satisfaction
Leader EI (Global Trait EI)	1.000	0.670**
Overall Job Satisfaction (MSQ Overall)	0.670**	1.000

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between leaders’ global emotional intelligence and employees’ overall job satisfaction ($r = 0.67, p < .01$). This finding supports the hypothesis that emotionally intelligent leadership is a significant predictor of employee satisfaction. The strength of the correlation indicates that improvements in leaders’ EI are likely to translate into meaningful gains in workforce morale and retention.

Table 5: Regression analysis predicting job satisfaction from leaders’ EI and covariates.

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.740	0.765	—	-0.967	0.339
Leader EI	0.859	0.146	0.674	5.879	0.000
Tenure (years)	0.002	0.016	0.015	0.133	0.895
Age (years)	-0.004	0.007	-0.061	-0.530	0.599

Regression results confirmed that leaders’ emotional intelligence was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.674, p < .001$). Other covariates such as tenure and age did not show significant effects, suggesting that EI exerts a more direct influence on satisfaction than demographic factors. The model explained a substantial proportion of variance in job satisfaction, underscoring the practical importance of investing in EI development programs for the transport and logistics sector in Zambia’s leadership.

The regression coefficients indicate that leaders’ emotional intelligence (EI) is a significant positive predictor of employees’ overall job satisfaction ($B = 0.859, \beta = 0.674, t = 5.879, p < 0.001$), meaning that higher EI among leaders is associated with higher job satisfaction. In contrast, tenure ($B = 0.002, p = 0.895$) and age ($B = -0.004, p = 0.599$) are not statistically significant predictors, suggesting that employees’ length of service and age do not meaningfully influence job satisfaction in this model.

Qualitative Evidence on the EI–Job Satisfaction Link

The focus group data provide rich explanations for why emotionally intelligent behavior by leaders is associated with higher job satisfaction. Three themes emerged including Empathetic and supportive leadership enhances motivation and commitment, Fair and respectful conflict

handling reduces frustration and turnover intentions and Poor emotional regulation and inconsistent communication undermine satisfaction

Participants repeatedly linked empathetic behavior such as listening to personal challenges, offering flexibility when needed, and acknowledging stress to increased satisfaction and willingness to go “the extra mile”:

“When my supervisor understands that I am a single parent and sometimes I need to leave a bit early, it makes me more committed. I feel respected as a human being, not just a worker.” (FG2-P4)

Employees highlighted that leaders who handle mistakes and conflicts calmly, without shouting or humiliating staff, foster a more positive climate and reduce thoughts of leaving:

“If there is a mistake, some leaders call you aside and correct you nicely. You feel you can improve. But where they shout in front of others, people start looking for jobs elsewhere.” (FG1-P8)

Where leaders were perceived as moody, unpredictable, or prone to reacting harshly, employees reported reduced satisfaction and increased stress:

“Sometimes you find the supervisor in a bad mood; whatever you say is wrong. On such days you just keep quiet and do the minimum.” (FG1-P2)

These qualitative narratives are consistent with the strong positive correlation and regression results, illustrating that emotionally intelligent leadership expressed through empathy, fairness, calm conflict management, and clear communication directly shapes employees’ day-to-day experience and overall satisfaction with their jobs.

Strategies for Improving Job Satisfaction among Employees in the Transport and Logistics Sector

We sought to identify strategies that the transport and logistics sector in Zambia can adopt to strengthen employee job satisfaction, particularly by leveraging leaders’ emotional intelligence. These strategies were primarily derived from focus group discussions, supported by insights from the open-ended questionnaire responses.

Participants recommended structured training program for supervisors and managers focusing on self-awareness, empathy, and conflict management:

“Leaders need training on how to handle staff emotions, especially during pressure. If they understand themselves better, they will also handle us better.” (FG2-P7)

Employees felt that formal EI training, refreshers, and coaching would help standardize positive behaviors across departments, reducing the observed variability.

Respondents called for more regular and transparent communication about performance expectations, organizational changes, and feedback. They emphasized that recognition even simple verbal appreciation significantly boosts satisfaction:

“Just saying ‘thank you’ or recognizing effort in meetings motivates us a lot. It doesn’t always have to be money.” (FG1-P5)

Suggestions included monthly feedback sessions, departmental briefings, and visible recognition of outstanding performance.

Employees proposed practical steps to ease workload pressures during peak periods, such as temporary staff support, better shift planning, and clearer scheduling:

“During peak season they can plan shifts better or bring in temps. When we are not overworked, we also become more satisfied and make fewer mistakes.” (FG1-P3)

These suggestions highlight the need to complement emotionally intelligent leadership with operational improvements.

Many participants indicated that clear career paths and fair promotion processes would significantly enhance job satisfaction. Proposed measures included transparent criteria for promotion, regular developmental discussions, and opportunities for cross-departmental exposure:

“If we know what it takes to move to the next level, and leaders support us with training, we will feel that our company cares about our future.” (FG2-P1)

Collectively, these strategies emphasize both behavioral (emotional intelligence, communication, recognition) and structural (workload management, career development) interventions. They suggest that improving job satisfaction in the transport and logistics sector requires aligning leadership behavior with emotionally intelligent practices while addressing key organizational systems and processes.

4. Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between leaders’ emotional intelligence (EI) and employee job satisfaction in the transport and logistics sector in Zambia. The findings revealed consistently high EI scores among leaders, moderate-to-high job satisfaction among employees, and a strong positive correlation between leaders’ EI and employee satisfaction. Regression analysis further confirmed EI as the most significant predictor of satisfaction, while demographic

variables such as age and tenure were not significant. These results align with and extend prior research on the role of emotionally intelligent leadership in organizational outcomes.

The strong positive correlation between leaders' EI and employee satisfaction ($r = 0.67, p < .01$) supports the growing body of evidence that emotionally intelligent leadership enhances employee attitudes and workplace climate. Recent meta-analyses and empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that EI predicts job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Dođru, 2022; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017; Alwali & Alwali, 2022). In particular, the emphasis on empathy, self-regulation, and sociability resonates with Antonopoulou's (2024) argument that these dimensions are central to effective leadership. Our qualitative findings employees valuing empathetic conflict management and respectful communication mirror these theoretical claims. Contrary evidence, however, suggests that EI may not always exert a uniform influence across contexts. For instance, Matjie (2023) found that organizational leadership effectiveness in South Africa was moderated by cultural intelligence, indicating that EI alone may not fully explain satisfaction outcomes. Similarly, Els and Jacobs (2023) highlighted the interplay of authentic leadership and psychological well-being, suggesting that EI must be integrated with other leadership qualities to maximize impact. These perspectives caution against over-reliance on EI as a singular explanatory factor.

Employees reported slightly higher intrinsic satisfaction compared to extrinsic satisfaction, indicating that meaningful work and teamwork were stronger motivators than pay or external rewards. This finding is consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory, which has long recognized intrinsic motivators as central to job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959). More recent studies reaffirm this distinction, showing that intrinsic satisfaction often outweighs extrinsic factors in predicting commitment and retention (Aksoy & Adiguzel, 2026; Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Chakkaravarthy & Bhaumik, 2025). Nevertheless, some research emphasizes the importance of extrinsic rewards, particularly in contexts where compensation disparities are pronounced. For example, Mweetwa and Chipindi (2025) identified pay and promotion stagnation as key drivers of turnover in Zambia's public service. Our qualitative findings echo this tension: while employees valued recognition and organizational reputation, concerns about workload and limited career growth were evident. This suggests that the transport and logistics sector in Zambia must balance intrinsic motivators with structural improvements in workload management and promotion pathways. Regression analysis revealed that age and tenure were not significant predictors of satisfaction. This finding contrasts with some prior studies that identified tenure as a moderating factor in satisfaction outcomes (Sishuwa & Phiri, 2020). However, it aligns with more recent evidence suggesting that demographic variables exert weaker effects compared to leadership behaviors and organizational culture (Kinanu, 2025; Singh & Singh, 2025). The implication is that the transport and logistics sector's leadership practices, rather than employee demographics, are the primary drivers of satisfaction.

The qualitative evidence provided rich explanations for the quantitative findings. Employees emphasized that empathetic leadership, fair conflict resolution, and respectful communication enhanced motivation and reduced turnover intentions. These narratives are consistent with

Goleman's (1998, 2012) long-standing argument that EI fosters trust and collaboration, and with contemporary studies showing that EI training enhances leadership effectiveness (Rashid, & Malik, 2026); Ismail, 2023). Conversely, reports of poor emotional regulation and inconsistent communication highlight the risks of low EI, supporting earlier findings that emotionally volatile leadership undermines satisfaction and performance (Ashraf & Khan, 2014). The strategies proposed by employees systematic EI training, improved communication and recognition, workload management, and career development are strongly supported by recent scholarship. Emotional intelligence training has been shown to improve leadership effectiveness and employee outcomes (Rashid, & Malik, 2026; Othman, Ahmed, & Williams, 2024). Transparent communication and recognition practices are also widely recognized as critical to satisfaction (Mbili, 2020). Addressing workload and career development aligns with broader organizational studies emphasizing structural interventions alongside behavioral leadership improvements (Banda, 2019).

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