



Influence of Emotional Intelligence on the Military Training Performance among Military Trainees in Nigeria

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on the military training performance of Nigerian military trainees. Using a cross-sectional survey design, a total of 142 participants were selected by convenience sampling technique from two military training institutions. Participants consisting of 134 males (94.4%) and 8 females (5.6 %) within an age range of 18-25 years across training years, arm of service and battalions made up the sample population. The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) and the Self-rated Training performance Scale were used for data collection. The result of hypothesis one showed an insignificant relationship between all emotional intelligence dimensions and military training performance among military trainees while the second hypothesis was confirmed as it showed that demographic variables jointly predicted military training performance of trainees ($R = .259$; $F = 1.953$, $P < .05$) but only gender independently predicted military training performance of trainees at a significant level ($\beta = .241$; $t = 2.791$, $P < .05$). The findings were discussed and recommendations were made.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Military Performance, Military Trainees, Military Training Performance, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Military institutions around the world have maintained their reputation for discipline, efficiency and strict work ethics throughout the years. In Nigeria, the military is known to uphold pillars of integrity, discipline, courage, values, effectiveness, professionalism and solution orientation (Isa & Sabo, 2022). These character traits are indoctrinated into its personnel during training, especially in the training of future military commanders; trainees.

Globally, military academies are educational institutions which prepare candidates for service in the officer corps. It normally provides a combination of education and rigorous military training within a military environment, the exact definition depending on the country concerned. These military training institutions provide specialised services for officers at the operational, tactical and strategic level of the Armed Forces.

In Nigeria, military trainees are groomed in Military, Academic and Character development to instil discipline, physical and psychological readiness and leadership skills according to global best practices, culminating in the award of a bachelor's degree and presidential commissioning.

During this broad-based training, trainees are imbued with core military values including that of discipline and efficiency in the performance of military duties which in the case of officers is the administration of men and materiel. In general, military performance refers to the measure of success or failure demonstrated by an armed force in executing assigned missions and achieving strategic objectives (Mohammad, 2025). This is dependent on several interrelated variables including personnel, logistics, leadership quality, morale among others. Military performance can be described as any activity or collection of responses that leads to a result on, an accomplishment of, or has an effect on an assigned military task. It can also be described as the behavior of a person (the performer) when faced with a specific military task (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020).

Trainees' military performance in this context therefore refers to their ability to excel at a specialised, curated combination of activities such as military subjects and exercises, physical training exercises,

strength and endurance training, sports and club activities, team cohesion, administration of junior trainees, personal turnout, puttee parades, while taking orders and maintaining the military values and personality. Fulfilling his or her academic and military responsibilities under limited time can stretch a trainee physically, mentally and emotionally. This physical, mental and emotional stress, if not dealt with using appropriate coping mechanisms, can lead to poor academic and military performance and even ill health (Moore, et.al., 2023).

Some effective methods of coping with the stress of trainees' performance include self-motivation, performance satisfaction, goal clarity, conducive environment, application of constructive feedback and constant application of sound emotional intelligence (Wong & Law, 2002).

Emotional intelligence is a type of intelligence that involves the ability to process emotional information and use it in reasoning and other cognitive activities or tasks (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2020). The term was first proposed by U.S. psychologists Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer which they described as "a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (Salovey & Mayer 1990). According to Mayer and Salovey's 1997 model, it comprises four abilities: to perceive and appraise emotions accurately; to access and evoke emotions when they facilitate cognition; to comprehend emotional language and make use of emotional information; and to regulate one's own and others' emotions to promote growth and well-being (Salovey & Mayer 1997). Emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) is an index of emotional intelligence.

Several demographic factors have been found to influence emotional intelligence including gender. Though several studies have been conducted on the relationships between gender and emotional intelligence, findings are largely inconclusive. For instance, while Ahmad, Bangash & Khan (2009) found a male dominance in emotional intelligence as compared to their female counterparts, Anteneh & Tsefaye (2023) discovered a female dominance in their research sample. In general, literature holds that while general EQ is often similar for both genders (Oriaku et. al, 2020), males and females tend to possess specific strengths and weaknesses. For instance, women often perform better in areas of empathy, emotional expression, interpersonal relationship and regulation of others emotions (Urban, Salavera & Usan, 2025) while males may score higher

on self-regard, assertiveness and stress tolerance (Kaneez, 2006). Other factors including personality, age, experience, training and education also influence emotional intelligence (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016; Stami et. al, 2018 and Samuel & Osman, 2022).

This research therefore seeks to study the possible influence of emotional intelligence on military training performance military trainees in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Emotional intelligence has been established recurrently in literature as a key driver of performance, leadership, positive work place attitudes and outcomes in both military and civilian populations. Despite this fact, military populations appear to be averse to anything concerning emotions at a basic level. This could be for fear of misinterpretation or due to concerns of the primary weakening in the necessary task orientation that this mindset could cause (Aguilar & George, 2019).

Emotional intelligence simply entails understanding and managing one's emotions and positively influencing that of others. It is an invaluable quality for any person to have especially for people whose personal and/or professional lives are demanding and puts them under a lot of pressure such as trainees. Preliminary investigations from younger trainees reveals that they are generally unaware of the effect of their emotions on the behaviour, attitude and overall outcomes. Therefore, sound emotional intelligence could be a necessary advantage to help trainees to successfully cope with their rigorous training and improve their performance and avoid negative easily avoided outcomes related to emotional mismanagement.

Despite these, little to no literature exists regarding the study of emotional intelligence and training performance especially among young trainees. This study therefore aims to add the body of knowledge in research about the variables discussed in this research as it concerns trainees in particular and military personnel in training in general.

1.2 Research Objectives

- Examine the relationship between emotional intelligence on the level of military performance among military trainees.
- Investigate the influence of demographic variable on military training performance possessed by military trainees

1.3 Hypothesis

The emotional intelligence of Nigerian military trainees will have a significant relationship with military training performance.

Demographic variables will have significant joint and independent influence on military training performance of Nigerian military trainees.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and the level of military performance among Nigerian military?
- How do selected demographic variables influence military training performance possessed by Nigerian military trainees?

2. Literature Review

The military, as an institution, is best known for its efficiency in performing stipulated tasks. This involves conducting successful operations at the least cost, with the least effort in the prescribed order (Obi-Nwosu & Chinenye, 2018). Achieving this is dependent on several factors including institutional, process and human factors (Dyrstad, et.al., 2010; Obi-Nwosu, 2012).

Emotional Intelligence is increasingly being recognised as a pivotal skill which enhances both individual and organisational performance, (Geetha, et.al, 2025) such as the military. Despite this fact, it is an important but underexplored concept within the military context (Aguilar & George, 2019). This may be because traditional military leadership focuses more on task achievement and operational efficiency and less on the emotional wellbeing of its members. Other possible challenges/ ideological conflicts that could be experienced while applying emotional intelligence in a military setting include issues related to: flexibility and creativity vs conformity, discipline and following orders; task-oriented work behaviours vs relationship-oriented work behaviours; appropriate conflict management styles; problem solving assessment styles among others (Singh, 2014; Livingstone et al., 2002; Baker, 2012; Kark, Karazi-Presler & Tubi, 2016).

Military leaders and personnel today have to deal with new dimensions of intellectual, cultural, practical and often hybrid challenges which were never encountered in the recent past, requiring new approaches to problem solving. In light of the changing face of work and the world, traditional measures of success (task completion & technical success) are no longer enough

to measure long term effectiveness (Uwa, 2021). In essence, it is no longer only about what you do, but about how you do it, the strength and persistence of your impact and essentially its efficiency. Extant research provides emotional intelligence as an important tool for modern day leadership success and places it as a key driver of work performance and in turn, organisational efficiency (Afolabi, Awosola & Omole, 2010; Boyatzis & Soler, 2012; Golman & Boyatzis, 2017; Uwa, 2021).

Emotional Intelligence consists of four fundamental capabilities: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills (Goleman, 1998) which have been consistently associated with positive work and life outcomes. While these capabilities are usually considered in relation to individuals, Goleman et al. (2002) believes that these competencies can apply to teams and have the potential to optimize individual and team effectiveness and performance. This is important because military training heavily relies on and encourages team-based systems for exercises, training and real time performance of duties, thus team cohesion, which is greatly influenced by emotional intelligence, is also a key driver of performance and efficiency (Orme & Kehoe, 2020). Emotional intelligence impacts on individuals managing interdisciplinary, diverse and complex working relationships, performance, staff retention and job satisfaction (Goleman 1998). Hence, while, intellect and expertise matter, it is emotional competence that sets star teams and individuals apart from those that are less successful. However, Coetzer (2016) reported that both emotional and cognitive intelligence are both important because they provide complimentary and different functions. Specifically, cognitive intelligence supports strategic planning, technical proficiency and problem solving while emotional intelligence facilitates team work, resilience, empathy, leadership in complex and evolving environments.

Emotional intelligence is a construct that can be developed and is linked to the development and maintenance of several positive performance qualities such as improved decision-making, risk-taking, interpersonal relationships, commitment, prioritising, problem solving and many other behaviours associated with effective performance (Felice & Weese, 2024). Sound emotional intelligence can help drive trainees' behaviour positively. Learning how to manage their emotions and that of others especially when they are under pressure will greatly improve their leadership and interpersonal skills as well as their mental stamina during military training. It is also likely that a high EQ could help trainees to communicate better, reduce their anxiety and stress, defuse conflicts, improve relationships, empathize

with others, and effectively overcome challenges during their training (Aguilar & George, 2019).

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

the cross-sectional survey design was employed. This includes the use of questionnaire responses to determine the level of emotional intelligence (Independent Variable) among Nigerian military trainees and its influence on trainee’s military training performance (Dependent Variable). This design is apt for this study because it allows the researcher to

collect quantitative data from a large representative number of participants over a short period of time (Glasgow, 2005).

3.2 Participants

A total of 142 participants, drawn from two military training institutions, took part in this study with 134 males (94.4%) and 8 females (5.6 %) participants possessed an age range of 18-25 years with a mean and standard deviation of 20.72 ±1.50. Trainees were randomly selected from all departments, arms of service and battalions (see Appendix 1 for details).

Table 1: Frequency and Percentages of the Characteristics of Trainees

VARIABLES		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES
Gender	Male	138	94.4
	Female	8	5.6
	Total	142	100%
Training Rank	1	42	29.6
	2	44	31.0
	3	37	26.1
	4	19	13.4
	Total	142	100%
Arm of Service	Air Force	38	26.8
	Army	66	46.5
	Navy	38	26.8
	Total	142	100%
Battalion	A	41	28.9
	B	18	12.0
	C	78	54.9
	D	5	3.5
	Total	142	100%

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentages of the characteristics of 142 trainees of 138 (94.4%) were male trainees and 8(5.6%) were female trainees. Their age ranged from 17-25 years with a mean age of 20.72 and standard deviation of 1.504. In terms of training group 42 (29.6%) were in rank 1, 44(31%) in rank 2, 37(26.1%) in rank 3 and 19(13.4%) were in rank 4. The table also shows that 38(26.8%) were in the Air force as well as 38(26.8%) in the Navy and 66(46.5%) in the Army. In terms of battalion 41 (28.9%) were in A, 18(12%) in B, 78(54.4%) were in C and 5(3.5%) were in D.

3.3 Sampling technique

Based on ethical restrictions, the total population size was not revealed in this study, however, participants were selected using convenience sampling method which is dependent on availability and accessibility of participants. This ensured that trainee training schedules were not affected by this study and only those available and willing to participate took part in this research.

3.4 Instruments

A questionnaire consisting of three sections was used for data collection. Section A measured socio-demographic variables of participants while. Section B and C consisted of scales measuring emotional intelligence and Military Training Performance respectively.

3.5 The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10)

The Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10) is a brief version of the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Schutte et al. (1998) containing 10 items of the 33-item EIS. The BEIS-10, developed by Davies et. al, (2010) was proposed to be particularly useful in situations where brevity is important (such as a busy military training context) and may help to maintain ecological validity with the central benefit of offering a way to capture EI quickly while maintaining acceptable psychometric properties. The scale is structured around 5 key EI dimensions namely: appraisal of own emotions, appraisal of others' emotions, regulation of own emotions, regulation of others' emotions and utilization of emotions, with 2 items per factor. The BEIS-10 is a self-report scale with a 5-point Likert style response scale ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. It possesses a good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients commonly falling between .74 and .84 per dimension with Davies et. al reporting an overall Cronbach alpha of 0.84.

3.6 The Self-Rated Military Training Performance Scale

The Self-rated performance scale or questionnaire was adapted from the performance traits subscale of the US Navy Evaluation Report and Counselling Record, E1-E6 (2002). The questionnaire is a seven-item inventory designed to provide a formal and quantitative assessment of personnel job performance, professional character and leadership skills. It has been useful for documenting specific strengths and weaknesses, guiding career development and providing evidence for retention or promotion decisions. All items are answered on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from (3) Better than the average recruit, (2) Same as the average recruit, and (1) Worse than the average recruit. The measure is considered to have a good construct and predictive validity while being reliable (Helzer & Bacolod, 2022). In this study, it possessed a Cronbach Alpha of 0.75.

3.7 Procedure

The researchers were formally introduced at selected institutions where permission was sought from relevant authorities and granted. Battalion Adjutants and Regimental Sergeant Majors were (RSMs) assisted in the conduct of the data collection phase. The researcher was granted permission to conduct the data collection during trainee "prep" period, when they are gathered in classrooms for study and revision. In each class, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to prospective participants and sought their consent to participate. After this was granted, the researcher approached participants and administered the questionnaires to them. Filled questionnaires were immediately retrieved and respondent confidentiality/anonymity was maintained. Prospective participants who did not feel comfortable with participating in the study were excused. The data collection phase took two days to complete. Out of 160 questionnaires administered and retrieved, a total of 142 questionnaires were properly filled and used for data analysis in this study.

4. Results

Hypothesis 1: Hypothesis one stated that, emotional intelligence of Nigerian military trainees will have a significant relationship with trainee's Military Training Performance. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Military Training Performance

	MTP	AOE	AOOE	ROE	ROOE	UOE
Military training Performance	1	-.108	-.036	.019	.045	-.008
Appraisal of own emotion		1	.504*	.448*	-.358*	.354*
Appraisal of others emotion			1	.507*	.491	.555*
Regulation of own emotion				1	.427*	.467*
Regulation of others emotion					1	.576*
Utilization of emotion						1

Table 2 revealed no statistically significant relationship between any of the five emotional intelligence dimensions and military training performance. The results are as follows: appraisal of own emotion ($r = -.108, P > 0.05$), appraisal of others emotion ($r = -.036, P > 0.05$); regulation of own emotion ($r = .019, P > 0.05$), regulation of others emotion ($r = .045, P > 0.05$) and utilization of emotion ($r = -.008, P > 0.05$). In other words, the hypothesis was not confirmed in this study. This implies that emotional intelligence does not influence military training performance trainees.

Hypothesis 2: Hypothesis two stated that, demographic variables will have significant joint and independent influence on military training performance of trainees. This hypothesis was tested with Multiple Regression Analysis in Table 3

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis on Military Training Performance of Trainees

VARIABLES	β	T	R	R ²	F
Years Training	.080	.836			
Gender	.241	2.791*			
Age	-.010	-.099	.259	.067	1.953*
Battalion	.029	.345			
Arm of Service	.003	.040			

Sig. Level: * $P < .05$, (df=5, 136)

Table 3 shows the summary of the regression analysis where it revealed that, training year, gender, age, battalion and arm of service jointly and significantly predict military training performance of trainees ($R = .259; F = 1.953, P < .05$) and indicated about 25.9% variance for trainee’s military training performance. In addition, the result shows a statistically significant independent influence of gender ($\beta = .241; t = 2.791, P < .05$) in training performance but insignificant independent influence of year of training ($\beta = .080; t = .836, P > .05NS$); age ($\beta = -.010; t = -.099, P > .05NS$); battalion ($\beta = .029; t = .345, P > .05NS$) and arm of service ($\beta = .003; t = .040, P > .05NS$) in training performance of Nigerian trainees. This implies that, gender is the major significantly predictor of trainees training performance in this population.

5. Discussion

The first hypothesis which stated that the emotional intelligence of Nigerian military trainees will have a significant relationship with trainee military training performance was not confirmed in this study. This implies that emotional intelligence does not influence military training performance of trainees. This finding is inconsistent with general literature which shows that

emotional intelligence correlates highly with other positive military performance outcomes such as resilience, stress regulation, adaptability, leadership effectiveness (Trabun, 2002; Odin et al., 2015; King, et al., 2024; Lokyan, et al., 2025). However, the study findings may be due to contextual peculiarities. Military trainees undergo highly engaging and physically impactful training aimed at honing them physically and psychologically for operational effectiveness. Data was collected around the period in the training cycle in which trainees are involved in intense physical training and endurance exercises; these may have had some effect on the results. Also, young trainees function at the operational level with their job basically constituted of receiving training and taking instructions, emotional intelligence, from their inexperienced perspective, may therefore not be perceived as being high enough on the training scale, among other more pressing factors, to affect their training performance.

The study confirmed the second hypothesis which stated that demographic variables will have significant joint and independent influence on military training performance of trainees as significant. The results revealed that training year, gender, age, battalion and

arm of service jointly and significantly predict military training performance of trainees and indicated about 25.9% variance for trainee's military training performance. In addition, the result shows a statistically significant independent influence of gender in training performance but insignificant independent influence of year of training, age, battalion and arm of service in training performance of trainees. This implies that, gender is a major significant predictor of trainees training performance. This finding is consistent with literature which records an inconclusive but significantly present gender difference in emotional intelligence. For instance, Ahmad, Bangash & Khan (2009) found a male dominance in emotional intelligence as compared to their female counterparts while Anteneh & Tsefaye (2023) discovered a female dominance in their research sample.

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

This study sought to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and military training performance of military trainees. The findings of this study have revealed that emotional intelligence had no significant relationship with military training performance and demographic variables, specifically gender, significantly predicts military training performance of military trainees. It is therefore recommended that trainees be exposed to seminars, workshops, and field training that will reinforce the importance of emotional intelligence at all levels of performance and how best to apply its principle for optimal results and improved self and general leadership. Additionally, non-stigmatizing counselling sessions should be organised for trainees frequently to ensure that they meet the stress and rigours of military training with a resilient, emotionally intelligent mind and to encourage them to practice emotional intelligence skills alongside their rigorous and beneficial training. Lastly, further research should be conducted on more contextually specific factors that can drive performance and military efficiency.

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