

Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Managerial Performance among Middle-Level Managers in Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding Firms at V.O. Chidambaranar Port

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Abstract: Emotional intelligence has emerged as a critical managerial competency that significantly influences leadership effectiveness, decision-making, conflict management, stress management, and overall organizational performance. In the highly competitive logistics and supply chain sector, middle-level managers play a pivotal role in coordinating operational activities, managing teams, and ensuring effective communication between senior management and frontline employees. This study examines Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Managerial Performance among Middle-Level Managers in Customs House Agents (CHA) and Freight Forwarding Firms with reference to Thoothukudi District. The primary objective of the study is to assess the influence of emotional intelligence on managerial performance. Specifically, the study examines the five dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, and evaluates their contribution to managerial performance measured through leadership, decision-making, conflict management, and stress management. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 110 middle-level managers selected using a convenient sampling technique from Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms associated with logistics operations connected to V.O. Chidambaranar Port. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, research articles, government publications, and relevant online sources. The collected data were analysed using Percentage Analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation, Pearson's Correlation Analysis, and Multiple Regression Analysis with the help of SPSS. The findings reveal that leadership recorded the highest mean score among the managerial performance dimensions, followed by decision-making, conflict management, and stress management, indicating a high level of managerial performance among the respondents. Correlation analysis revealed that all five dimensions of emotional intelligence have a positive and statistically significant relationship with managerial performance. Among them, social skills exhibited the strongest positive correlation, followed by motivation and self-regulation. Multiple regression analysis further confirmed that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of managerial performance, explaining 70.9% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.709$). Social skills emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by motivation, self-regulation, self-awareness, and empathy. The study concludes that emotional intelligence plays a vital role in enhancing managerial effectiveness and recommends that Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms implement emotional intelligence-based training programmes, leadership development initiatives, coaching, and periodic behavioural assessments to strengthen managerial competencies and improve organizational performance.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Managerial Performance, Leadership, Middle-Level Managers, Customs House Agents, Freight Forwarding Firms, Logistics Sector

1. Introduction



In the contemporary business environment, organizations operate in increasingly complex, competitive, and rapidly changing conditions, making effective managerial performance a key determinant of organizational success. While technical competence and intellectual ability remain important, researchers have emphasized that emotional competencies significantly influence leadership effectiveness, employee engagement, decision-making, and organizational outcomes. Emotional Intelligence (EI) has therefore emerged as a critical managerial capability that enables individuals to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in themselves and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

The concept of Emotional Intelligence gained widespread recognition through the work of Daniel Goleman (1995), who argued that emotional intelligence is often a stronger predictor of workplace success than cognitive intelligence (IQ). According to Goleman (1998), emotionally intelligent managers possess competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which enable them to manage interpersonal relationships effectively and achieve superior organizational performance. These competencies contribute to effective leadership, conflict resolution, employee motivation, teamwork, and organizational commitment.

Managerial performance refers to the ability of managers to accomplish organizational objectives efficiently through planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and coordinating organizational resources. Effective managerial performance depends not only on technical knowledge but also on the ability to communicate, inspire employees, manage workplace conflicts, adapt to changing circumstances, and make sound decisions under pressure (Boyatzis, 1982). Managers with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to understand employee emotions, foster collaboration, build trust, and create a positive work environment, ultimately improving organizational effectiveness (George, 2000).

The logistics and freight forwarding industry is one of the most dynamic components of global supply chain management. Customs House Agents (CHAs) and Freight Forwarding firms facilitate international trade by handling customs documentation, cargo movement, transportation coordination, warehousing, freight consolidation, and regulatory compliance. These organizations operate in a highly competitive environment characterized by strict timelines, changing customs regulations, customer expectations, and technological advancements. Consequently, middle-level managers are required to perform multiple roles involving operational coordination, employee supervision, customer relationship management, and communication with government agencies and logistics partners.

Middle-level managers occupy a strategic position between management and operational employees. They are responsible for translating organizational policies into operational practices while maintaining employee motivation and ensuring service quality. Since their work involves continuous interaction with employees, customers, customs officials, shipping companies, and transport operators, emotional intelligence becomes an essential competency for managing interpersonal relationships and organizational challenges. Research has consistently shown that emotionally intelligent managers demonstrate greater adaptability, resilience, leadership effectiveness, and decision-making capabilities than managers with lower emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

The V.O. Chidambaranar Port is one of India's major ports and serves as an important gateway for international trade in South India. Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms connected with the port play a significant role in ensuring the efficient movement of goods across domestic and international markets. Although many of these firms conduct their operational activities through networks extending into Thoothukudi District, the increasing complexity of logistics operations requires managers to possess not only technical expertise but also strong emotional competencies to effectively manage people, processes, and customer expectations.

Previous studies have established positive relationships between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness, organizational commitment, employee satisfaction, job performance, and managerial effectiveness (Wong & Law, 2002; Carmeli, 2003). However, relatively few studies have specifically examined emotional intelligence as a predictor of managerial performance among middle-level managers working in Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms, particularly in the context of Thoothukudi District. This research seeks to bridge

this gap by investigating how the dimensions of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—influence managerial performance.

The findings of the study are expected to contribute to both academic literature and managerial practice by providing empirical evidence on the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing managerial effectiveness. The study will also assist organizations in designing leadership development programmes, emotional intelligence training, performance management systems, and human resource policies aimed at strengthening managerial competencies and improving organizational performance. As the logistics industry continues to evolve in response to globalization, digital transformation, and changing customer expectations, emotionally intelligent managers will remain indispensable for achieving sustainable organizational growth and maintaining competitive advantage.

Statement of the problem

In the highly competitive and service-oriented logistics industry, the effectiveness of middle-level managers is crucial for ensuring operational efficiency, timely cargo movement, regulatory compliance, and customer satisfaction. Customs House Agents (CHAs) and Freight Forwarding firms associated with V.O. Chidambaranar Port operate in a dynamic environment characterized by tight deadlines, changing customs regulations, increasing customer expectations, and continuous coordination with multiple stakeholders. These challenges require managers not only to possess technical and operational expertise but also strong emotional intelligence to manage workplace stress, resolve conflicts, motivate employees, and maintain effective interpersonal relationships. Although emotional intelligence has been recognized as a significant factor influencing leadership and organizational performance, limited empirical research has examined its role in predicting managerial performance among middle-level managers in Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms, particularly with reference to Thoothukudi District. This research seeks to address this gap by investigating the extent to which emotional intelligence influences managerial performance and by identifying the emotional competencies that contribute most significantly to effective managerial functioning in the logistics and freight forwarding sector.

2. Review of Literature

- **Davaei and Gunkel (2024)** presented a systematic review on the role of emotional, cognitive, and cultural intelligence in organizational teams. The study highlighted that emotional intelligence is a key determinant of effective teamwork, collaboration, communication, and managerial success, particularly in dynamic organizational environments.
- **Nguyen and colleagues (2024)** investigated the role of supply chain managerial competence in improving logistics performance. The study concluded that managerial competencies, including emotional and interpersonal capabilities, significantly enhance logistics performance, operational efficiency, and organizational competitiveness in supply chain organizations.
- **Gajda and colleagues (2025)** examined the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership for building effective teams. The findings indicated that emotional intelligence competencies such as empathy, self-regulation, self-awareness, and social skills significantly improve leadership effectiveness, team cohesion, conflict resolution, employee motivation, and organizational performance. The study recommended integrating emotional intelligence assessment and leadership development programmes into organizational management practices.

Objectives of the study

- ✓ To assess the level of managerial performance among middle-level managers using leadership, decision-making, conflict management and stress management indicators.
- ✓ To analyse the relationship between EI dimensions and performance.
- ✓ To identify key EI predictors influencing managerial performance.

Hypothesis

H1: Emotional Intelligence has a significant positive influence on Managerial Performance.

H1a: Self-awareness significantly predicts managerial performance.

H1b: Self-regulation significantly predicts managerial performance.

H1c: Motivation significantly predicts managerial performance.

H1d: Empathy significantly predicts managerial performance.

H1e: Social skills significantly predicts managerial performance.

3. Research methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of Emotional Intelligence on Managerial Performance among middle-level managers working in Customs House Agents (CHA) and Freight Forwarding firms.

Study Area

The study is conducted among selected Customs House Agents (CHA) and Freight Forwarding firms operating in Thoothukudi District.

Population

The population comprises middle-level managers working in selected CHA and Freight Forwarding firms associated with V.O.Chidambaranar Port.

Sample Size

A total of 110 middle-level managers were selected as respondents for the study.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a convenience sampling technique to select respondents from Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms involved in logistics operations associated with V.O. Chidambaranar Port.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Secondary data were gathered from journals, books, company reports, and websites.

Statistical Tools

The collected data were analysed using SPSS with the following statistical techniques:

- Percentage Analysis
- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Correlation Analysis
- Multiple Regression Analysis

Results & Discussion

Socio-Economic and Professional Profile of the Respondents

The socio-economic and professional profile of the respondents provides an overview of the demographic and occupational characteristics of the middle-level managers included in the study. Variables such as age, gender,

educational-qualification, marital status, work experience, monthly income, department, and managerial experience help in understanding the background of the respondents and their suitability for the research. These characteristics may influence the level of emotional intelligence and managerial performance. Therefore, percentage analysis has been employed to classify and present the respondents according to their socio-economic and professional characteristics. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Socio-Economic and Professional Profile of Middle-Level Managers

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 30 Years	18	16
	31–40 Years	42	38
	41–50 Years	30	27
	Above 50 Years	20	18
Gender	Male	72	65
	Female	38	35
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	22	20
	Postgraduate	58	53
	Professional Qualification	30	27
Marital Status	Married	74	67
	Unmarried	36	33
Work Experience	Below 5 Years	20	18
	5–10 Years	35	32
	11–15 Years	30	27
	Above 15 Years	25	23
Monthly Income	Below ₹40,000	18	16
	₹40,001–₹60,000	40	36
	₹60,001–₹80,000	32	29
	Above ₹80,000	20	18
Department	Customs Clearance	34	31
	Freight Forwarding	30	27
	Operations	26	24
	Documentation & Customer Service	20	18
Managerial Experience	Below 3 Years	24	22
	3–6 Years	38	35
	7–10 Years	28	25

	Above 10 Years	20	18
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Source: Primary Data.

The table shows that the majority of the respondents are 31–40 years old (38.2%), male (65.5%), postgraduates (52.7%), and married (67.3%). Most respondents possess 5–10 years of work experience (31.8%), earn ₹40,001–₹60,000 per month (36.4%), and are employed in the Customs Clearance department (30.9%). Further, 34.5% of the respondents have 3–6 years of managerial experience. This indicates that the sample predominantly consists of experienced and professionally qualified middle-level managers working in Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms.

Analysis of Managerial Performance:

Managerial performance is a crucial determinant of organizational success, as it reflects the ability of managers to effectively lead teams, make informed decisions, resolve workplace conflicts, and manage occupational stress. In today's dynamic business environment, middle-level managers play a vital role in coordinating organizational activities and ensuring the achievement of strategic objectives. Evaluating managerial performance across these dimensions provides valuable insights into the strengths and areas requiring improvement among managers. Therefore, this study assesses managerial performance using four key indicators, namely leadership, decision-making, conflict management, and stress management, through descriptive statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation. The findings help to understand the overall performance level of middle-level managers in the selected Customs House Agents (CHA) and Freight Forwarding firms.

Table 2

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership	110	4.18	0.61
Decision-making	110	4.09	0.68
Conflict Management	110	3.97	0.73
Stress Management	110	3.85	0.76

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows the level of managerial performance among the 110 middle-level managers. Among the four dimensions, Leadership recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 4.18, SD = 0.61), indicating that the respondents possess strong leadership capabilities in guiding teams and achieving organizational objectives. Decision-making ranked second with a mean score of 4.09 (SD = 0.68), suggesting that managers are generally effective in making timely and appropriate decisions. Conflict Management obtained a mean score of 3.97 (SD = 0.73), reflecting a satisfactory ability to resolve workplace conflicts. Stress Management recorded the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.85, SD = 0.76), indicating that managers experience comparatively greater challenges in managing work-related stress. Overall, the results reveal that the respondents exhibit a high level of managerial performance, with leadership being their strongest competency.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Managerial Performance among middle-level managers. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the five dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, and overall managerial performance. A positive and statistically significant correlation indicates that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with improved managerial performance.

Table 3

Correlation between Emotional Intelligence Dimensions and Managerial Performance

Emotional Intelligence Dimensions	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Self-awareness	0.684**	.000	Moderate Positive Relationship
Self-regulation	0.721**	.000	Strong Positive Relationship
Motivation	0.758**	.000	Strong Positive Relationship
Empathy	0.693**	.000	Moderate Positive Relationship
Social Skills	0.781**	.000	Strong Positive Relationship

Source: Primary Data

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate that all five dimensions of Emotional Intelligence have a positive and statistically significant relationship with Managerial Performance ($p < 0.01$). Among the dimensions, Social Skills exhibited the strongest positive correlation with Managerial Performance ($r = 0.781$), followed by Motivation ($r = 0.758$) and Self-regulation ($r = 0.721$). Empathy ($r = 0.693$) and Self-awareness ($r = 0.684$) also demonstrated moderate positive relationships. These findings suggest that managers with higher emotional intelligence tend to exhibit better leadership, decision-making, conflict management, and stress management capabilities. Therefore, the study concludes that Emotional Intelligence is significantly associated with improved Managerial Performance among middle-level managers.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to identify the key dimensions of Emotional Intelligence that significantly predict managerial performance among middle-level managers. The five dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, were considered as independent variables, while managerial performance was treated as the dependent variable. This analysis helps determine the extent to which each emotional intelligence dimension contributes to predicting managerial performance.

Table 4

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.842	0.709	0.695	0.382

Table 5

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	36.825	5	7.365	50.462	0
Residual	15.182	104	0.146		

Total	52.007	109			
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Table 6

Coefficients

Emotional Intelligence Dimensions	Standardized Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.	Result
Self-awareness	0.184	2.415	.017	Significant
Self-regulation	0.241	3.186	.002	Significant
Motivation	0.273	3.724	.000	Significant
Empathy	0.162	2.196	.030	Significant
Social Skills	0.314	4.287	.000	Significant

Source: Primary Data

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that the Emotional Intelligence dimensions collectively explain 70.9% ($R^2 = 0.709$) of the variation in managerial performance. The ANOVA results reveal that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 50.462$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that Emotional Intelligence is a significant predictor of managerial performance.

Among the five dimensions, Social Skills emerged as the strongest predictor of managerial performance ($\beta = 0.314$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Motivation ($\beta = 0.273$, $p < 0.001$), Self-regulation ($\beta = 0.241$, $p = 0.002$), Self-awareness ($\beta = 0.184$, $p = 0.017$), and Empathy ($\beta = 0.162$, $p = 0.030$). Since all the dimensions have p-values less than 0.05, they significantly influence managerial performance.

Therefore, the study concludes that Emotional Intelligence is a significant predictor of managerial performance, with social skills and motivation contributing the most to enhancing leadership, decision-making, conflict management, and stress management among middle-level managers.

4. Findings

- The majority of the respondents (38%) belonged to the 31–40 years age group.
- Male respondents constituted the majority (65%) of the sample.
- More than half of the respondents (53%) possessed postgraduate qualifications, indicating a highly educated managerial workforce.
- A majority of the respondents (67%) were married.
- Most of the respondents (32%) had 5–10 years of work experience, reflecting considerable industry exposure.
- The largest proportion of respondents (36%) earned a monthly income between ₹40,001 and ₹60,000.
- About 31% of the respondents were employed in the Customs Clearance Department, followed by Freight Forwarding (27%) and Operations (24%).
- The majority of the respondents (35%) possessed 3–6 years of managerial experience, indicating adequate managerial exposure.
- The analysis of managerial performance revealed that leadership recorded the highest mean score (Mean = 4.18; SD = 0.61), indicating that middle-level managers possess strong leadership capabilities in guiding teams and achieving organizational objectives.

- Decision-making ranked second with a mean score of 4.09 (SD = 0.68), reflecting that managers are effective in making timely and appropriate decisions in their organizations.
- Conflict management obtained a mean score of 3.97 (SD = 0.73), indicating that the respondents demonstrate a satisfactory level of competence in resolving workplace conflicts.
- Stress management recorded the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.85; SD = 0.76), suggesting that managers experience comparatively greater challenges in managing work-related stress than the other performance dimensions.
- The overall managerial performance of the respondents was found to be high, with leadership emerging as the strongest competency among the four performance dimensions.
- Pearson's correlation analysis indicated that all five dimensions of Emotional Intelligence (EI) have a positive and statistically significant relationship with managerial performance ($p < 0.01$).
- Among the EI dimensions, Social Skills exhibited the strongest positive correlation with managerial performance ($r = 0.781$), followed by Motivation ($r = 0.758$) and Self-regulation ($r = 0.721$).
- Empathy ($r = 0.693$) and Self-awareness ($r = 0.684$) also showed significant positive relationships with managerial performance, indicating that improvements in these dimensions contribute to better managerial effectiveness.
- The multiple regression analysis revealed that the Emotional Intelligence dimensions collectively explained 70.9% ($R^2 = 0.709$) of the variation in managerial performance, demonstrating strong predictive power.
- The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 50.462$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that Emotional Intelligence is a significant predictor of managerial performance.
- Among the predictor variables, Social Skills ($\beta = 0.314$) emerged as the strongest predictor of managerial performance, followed by Motivation ($\beta = 0.273$), Self-regulation ($\beta = 0.241$), Self-awareness ($\beta = 0.184$), and Empathy ($\beta = 0.162$).
- Since all Emotional Intelligence dimensions had p-values less than 0.05, each dimension significantly influenced managerial performance, indicating that higher emotional intelligence contributes to improved leadership, decision-making, conflict management, and stress management among middle-level managers.

Suggestions

- ✓ Conduct regular emotional intelligence training programmes to improve self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills among middle-level managers.
- ✓ Organize stress management workshops, counselling sessions, and wellness programmes to help managers effectively manage workplace pressure.
- ✓ Introduce leadership development programmes focusing on communication, conflict resolution, decision-making, and team management.
- ✓ Encourage managers to practice self-assessment and seek regular feedback to enhance their emotional competencies.
- ✓ Promote effective communication and teamwork by creating a collaborative and supportive work environment.
- ✓ Implement mentoring and coaching programmes where experienced managers guide newly appointed middle-level managers.

- ✓ Incorporate emotional intelligence as one of the criteria in recruitment, promotion, performance appraisal, and succession planning.
- ✓ Encourage employee participation in decision-making to strengthen trust, motivation, and organizational commitment.
- ✓ Recognize and reward managers who demonstrate excellent emotional intelligence, leadership, and interpersonal skills.
- ✓ Provide continuous learning opportunities through seminars, workshops, and professional development programmes on emotional intelligence and managerial effectiveness.
- ✓ Strengthen employee assistance programmes and grievance redressal mechanisms to support managers in handling emotional and work-related challenges.
- ✓ Periodically assess the emotional intelligence levels of managers and provide appropriate developmental interventions based on the assessment results.

5. Conclusion

The present study concludes that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of managerial performance among middle-level managers working in Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms associated with V.O. Chidambaranar Port in Thoothukudi District. The findings reveal that the five dimensions of emotional intelligence are positively associated with managerial performance, and significantly predicts the managerial performance. The study further establishes that emotionally intelligent managers are better equipped to handle workplace pressure, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, motivate employees, build strong professional relationships, and make sound decisions in a dynamic logistics environment. These dimensions play a vital role in enhancing leadership capabilities and improving overall managerial performance. The study also highlights that self-awareness and self-regulation are fundamental emotional competencies that enable managers to respond effectively to operational challenges and changing business conditions. In the context of Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms, where managers interact with multiple stakeholders, coordinate time-sensitive logistics operations, and ensure regulatory compliance, emotional intelligence serves as a valuable managerial asset. Developing emotional competencies not only enhances individual managerial performance but also contributes to improved employee engagement, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. Therefore, the study emphasizes that organizations should integrate emotional intelligence into their human resource practices through recruitment, leadership development, training, performance evaluation, mentoring, and continuous learning initiatives. Strengthening emotional intelligence among middle-level managers will enable Customs House Agents and Freight Forwarding firms to build competent leadership, improve organizational performance, and sustain long-term competitive advantage in the rapidly evolving logistics and supply chain industry.

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