The Influence of Leaders Emotional Intelligence on Employees Engagement at Tangaza University, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Staff retention and corporate performance are directly correlated with employees' engagement. Nevertheless, leaders in higher education frequently overlook interpersonal and emotional ties. One of the most important leadership skills, emotional intelligence, promotes motivation, trust, and teamwork. At Tangaza University, a diverse academic and administrative environment calls for leaders who can inspire commitment and maintain high morale among employees. Yet, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which leaders' emotional intelligence influences employee engagement in this context. This study aimed to investigate the influence of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee engagement at Tangaza University, Nairobi, Kenya. The specific objectives were: to assess the level of emotional intelligence among leaders at Tangaza University; to examine the level of employee engagement at Tangaza University; and to determine the influence of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee engagement at Tangaza University. The correlational research design was adopted to examine the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement at Tangaza University. The 88 participants were selected using a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation from various university departments. Data was collected using standardized questionnaires distributed among academic and non-academic staff across various departments within the University. The study employed the Emotional Intelligence Scale to assess leadership emotional intelligence and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale to measure employee engagement. The ethical and logistical considerations included the authorization to conduct research, informed consent, anonymized questionnaires, privacy, and confidentiality, the right to withdrawal from the study, reporting results in aggregate form to conceal the identities of respondents and secure treatment of data. The mean emotional intelligence composite score was found to be 3.89 with a standard deviation of 0.62 on a scale of 1 to 5. This indicated that leaders at Tangaza University have a relatively high perceived level of emotional intelligence, with responses clustering closely around the mean. The mean score for employee engagement was 3.99 with a standard deviation*

of 0.58. This indicated a high level of employee engagement at Tangaza University, as the score is well above the midpoint of a typical 1-5 scale. The Pearson correlation coefficient between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement was 0.85, which indicated a strong, positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement. The finding suggested that leaders' emotional intelligence was a critical factor influencing engagement. By acknowledging employee achievements, fostering a safe work atmosphere, and routinely soliciting feedback and addressing fairness in workloads, the university can sustain high levels of engagement. Encouraging leaders to strengthen their emotional intelligence can increase employee engagement and benefit the University as a whole.

Keywords: influence, leaders, emotional intelligence, employee, engagement

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence in leadership includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Research from various scholars highlights its importance in effective leadership. Studies by Nabih et al. (2023), Quang et al. (2015), and Gilar-Corbi et al. (2023) show that emotionally intelligent leaders are better at managing workplace challenges and improving team dynamics, which ultimately enhances employee engagement and organizational performance. Employee engagement reflects an individual's emotional, cognitive, and physical involvement in their work. Engaged employees perform better and contribute to innovation and organizational progress. Research by Al-Ajlouni (2021) and Gemeda and Lee (2020) emphasize that engaged employees demonstrate higher creativity, motivation, and task performance, reinforcing the importance of fostering engagement in modern workplaces.

Studies from countries such as the USA, China, Australia, South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, and Ethiopia consistently link leaders' emotional intelligence to higher employee engagement. These studies show that emotionally intelligent leadership promotes job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, better performance, and positive organizational cultures. African studies highlight that emotionally aware leadership enhances productivity, ethical behavior, and faculty or employee engagement across sectors, including public service and higher education.

In Kenya, research in universities and other sectors also confirmed the positive relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Studies by Mwangi (2014), Muriuki and Gachunga (2018), and Igoki (2021) reveal that emotionally intelligent leadership encourages staff commitment, morale, and communication effectiveness. However, most existing research focuses on public universities, leaving a gap regarding private or faith-based institutions such as Tangaza University. This study aimed to address this gap by examining how leaders' emotional intelligence influences employee engagement in a private faith-based academic setting.

Over recent years, Tangaza University has faced challenges in employee engagement and retention that appear to be closely tied to leadership shortcomings, particularly in emotional intelligence which often can even be more important than intellectual quotient particularly in management, leadership, and governance. Emotional intelligence involves a leader's capacity to recognize, manage, and influence emotions in themselves and others, which is essential for a healthy and productive work environment. Recent patterns within the institution suggest that the weaknesses in this leadership trait have significantly contributed to declining employee motivation, employee turnover, and organizational leadership instability. A major sign of these challenges is the departure of several key staff members including employees in top management and several changes in middle managers over the last few years. Non-teaching staff such as IT, finance and marketing, procurement among others have resigned to join other institutions offering more supportive work environments or dismissed, while some faculty members have shifted from contractual employment to part-time arrangements, left the institution for better opportunities elsewhere. These losses disrupt workflow, create gaps in institutional expertise especially in secular specializations, and increase the burden of recruitment and training of new employees. Such trends over the last few years signal deeper issues related to leadership and workplace climate. The university has also experienced frequent changes in leadership and staff composition, particularly in units such as the School of Theology and the immigration department. These abrupt transitions foster a sense of instability and may reflect ineffective leadership approaches and an inability to manage internal conflicts; factors commonly associated with low emotional intelligence among leaders. This instability undermines trust and continuity, affecting both staff morale and institutional performance. Additionally, there are growing concerns about low morale and reduced commitment among employees. Behaviors such as absenteeism, unresponsiveness, and a lack of welcoming attitudes toward service seekers indicate that staff may feel neglected or undervalued. These symptoms often arise in workplaces where leaders fail to provide adequate emotional support, recognition, or inspiration. A lack of open and empathetic communication creates emotional distance, which can further weaken engagement and organizational effectiveness.
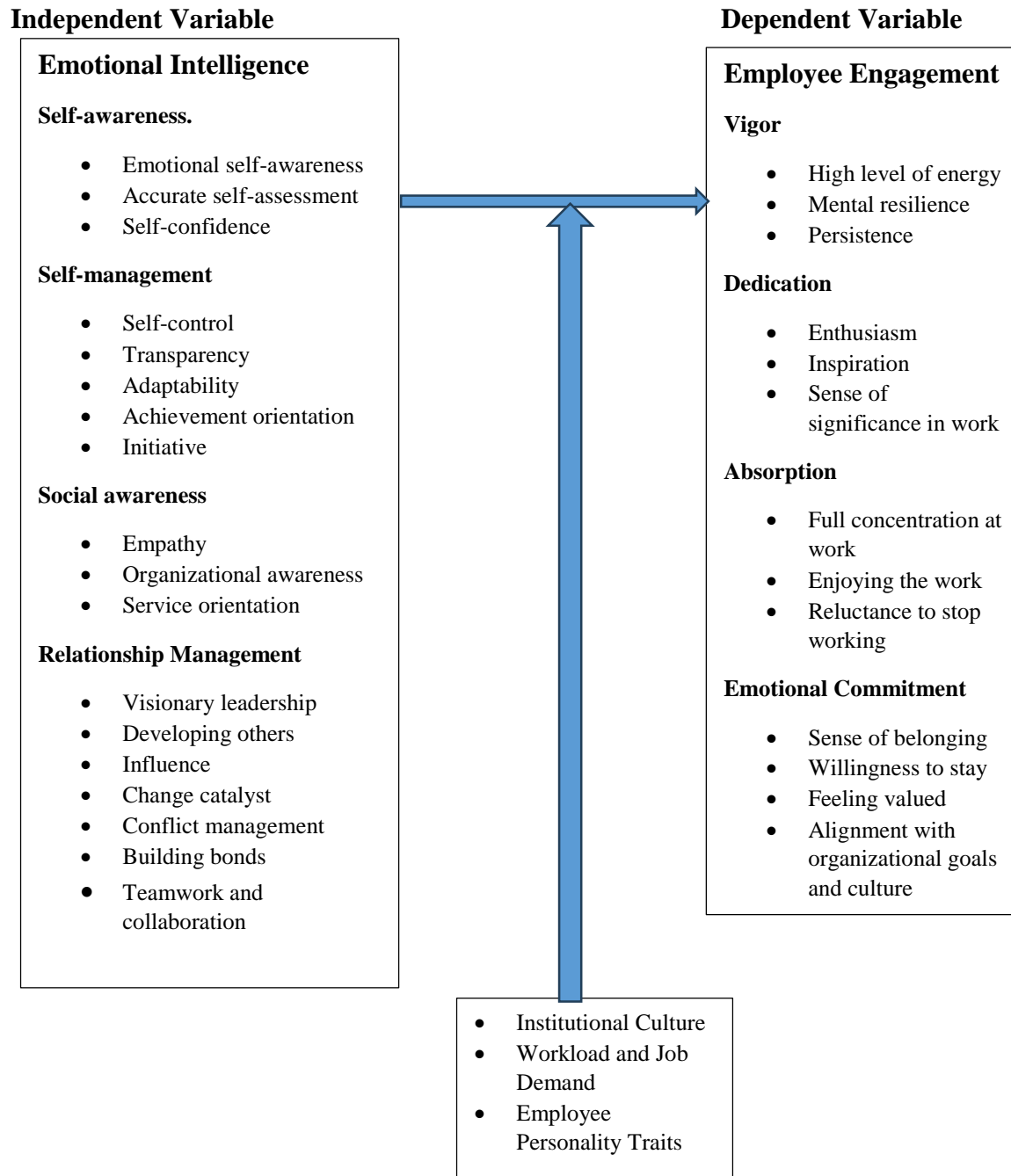
In contrast, research shows that organizations led by individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to experience increased morale, better communication, and stronger employee well-being (O.C. Tanner Institute, 2025). Given these benefits, addressing emotional intelligence deficits among leaders at Tangaza University is crucial. The study therefore aimed to examine the influence of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee engagement. Specifically, the study sought to assess the level of emotional intelligence among leaders; to examine the level of employee engagement; and to determine the influence of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee engagement at Tangaza University.

This study was anchored on two key theories: Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory and Kahn's Psychological Conditions Theory of Engagement. The theories provide the foundation for

understanding the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and employees' engagement within the university setting. Goleman (2015) proposed that emotional intelligence is composed of five fundamental elements: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In leadership contexts, these competencies influence how effectively leaders interact with and support their teams. Emotionally intelligent leaders are believed to foster healthy work relationships, encourage collaboration, and handle conflicts constructively. These behaviors create a positive organizational climate, which can significantly influence how engaged employees feel at work. By managing their own emotions and responding appropriately to those of others, such leaders contribute to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. In this research, Goleman's framework is used to examine how emotional intelligence functions as a leadership trait that can be assessed and linked to employee outcomes like engagement. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in shaping effective leadership behaviors that enhance workplace outcomes (Goleman, 2015). Kahn's (1990) model explains that employees are more likely to be engaged when they experience three psychological states: meaningfulness in their work, safety in expressing themselves, and availability of personal resources to invest in their roles. More recent research, such as that by Saks and Gruman (2018), reinforces the relevance of this theory, particularly in organizational settings where leadership impacts these psychological conditions. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can enhance psychological safety by being empathetic and supportive, and they can also promote meaningfulness by aligning roles with employees' strengths and values. This theory supports the study by explaining the mechanisms through which emotionally intelligent leadership can drive engagement, specifically by meeting employees' psychological needs in the workplace. Engagement increases when leaders create environments that meet employees' needs for safety, meaning, and personal capacity (Saks & Gruman, 2018).

Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework for this study.

Figure 1: Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Engagement.

Independent Variable

Emotional Intelligence

Self-awareness.

- Emotional self-awareness
- Accurate self-assessment
- Self-confidence

Self-management

- Self-control
- Transparency
- Adaptability
- Achievement orientation
- Initiative

Social awareness

- Empathy
- Organizational awareness
- Service orientation

Relationship Management

- Visionary leadership
- Developing others
- Influence
- Change catalyst
- Conflict management
- Building bonds
- Teamwork and collaboration

Dependent Variable

Employee Engagement

Vigor

- High level of energy
- Mental resilience
- Persistence

Dedication

- Enthusiasm
- Inspiration
- Sense of significance in work

Absorption

- Full concentration at work
- Enjoying the work
- Reluctance to stop working

Emotional Commitment

- Sense of belonging
- Willingness to stay
- Feeling valued
- Alignment with organizational goals and culture

- Institutional Culture
- Workload and Job Demand
- Employee Personality Traits

This study provides critical insights into how leaders' emotional intelligence influences employee engagement at Tangaza University, offering multiple benefits to key stakeholders. It helps top management and leadership understand how emotional intelligence enhances employee motivation, decision-making, and organizational culture, while middle managers gain strategies for conflict resolution, communication, and effective team management. The Human Resource Department benefits by understanding how emotional intelligence affects job satisfaction, retention, and engagement, enabling them to design improved recruitment, training, development, and performance management practices. Employees experience better job satisfaction, motivation, teamwork, and reduced stress within a more supportive work environment. Students benefit indirectly from more engaged and supported faculty and non-teaching staff, resulting in improved learning experiences and academic outcomes. Policymakers and educational authorities gain evidence to guide leadership development policies and training programs, and researchers obtain a solid foundation for further studies on emotional intelligence, workplace engagement, and leadership effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

The correlational cross-sectional design was used in this study. The location of the study was Tangaza University, situated in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya, along Langata South Road. The University began as the Theological Centre of Religious in 1986 and was officially inaugurated in 1987. It became a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in 1992 and received its full university charter in May 2024. The institution provides higher education rooted in Catholic values and has grown into a dynamic center of academic excellence. The university is composed of three main schools: Theology, Arts and Social Sciences, and Education, as well as various institutes, such as the Institute of Social Transformation, the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation, the Institute of Youth Studies, and the Centre for Leadership and Management. It offers a wide range of programs, including certificates, diplomas, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees. Tangaza serves a diverse student population, with representation from over 40 nationalities. Tangaza's mission is to nurture ethical servant leaders through a holistic educational experience grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Its vision promotes academic excellence, social justice, and community transformation. The Directorate of Catholic Identity and Community Engagement ensures that the university stays rooted in its core values by overseeing programs in chaplaincy, service learning, safeguarding, and inclusion. The university's motto, "Teaching Minds, Touching Hearts, Transforming Lives," reflects its commitment to intellectual and moral development (Tangaza University; website, 2024).

This study focused on the entire workforce of permanent and contract employees at Tangaza University. The group included teaching staff, administrative personnel, and support staff from different departments within the institution. These employees had ongoing interactions with university leadership and are therefore well-suited to provide insights into how leaders' emotional intelligence affects their engagement at work. Targeting this group allowed to gather diverse

perspectives from employees working under varying teams and responsibilities. Their experiences and views were crucial in exploring the link between leadership behaviors and employee engagement. Those employees who participated in the study met specific inclusion criteria. They were either permanent or contract employees of Tangaza University and worked at the institution for at least six months. This duration ensured that participants had sufficient interaction with leadership to form meaningful opinions. Additionally, participants were 18 years of age or older and voluntarily consented to take part in the study. The study excluded certain categories of employees to maintain the quality and relevance of the data collected. Interns, volunteers, and temporary workers were excluded due to their limited and often short-term interaction with the university's leadership. Similarly, employees who had been at the university for less than six months were not included, as their exposure to leadership may be insufficient. Staff members who were on long-term leave or otherwise unavailable during the data collection period were also excluded. Finally, any employee who declined participation or withdrew consent at any point was excluded from the research. The study used stratified random sampling to ensure each department is proportionally represented in the study.

Table 1 below shows the number of employees who met the criteria and those selected to participate in the study.

Academic Schools/Faculty and Support Departments	Number of employees who meet the criteria	Number of Employees selected from each Stratum
School of Theology	30	25
School of Arts and Sciences (SASS)	25	20
School of Education	10	7
Finance Department	5	3
ICT Department	5	3
Library Services	6	4
Human Resource Department	4	3
Administration Department	9	7
Marketing	6	5
Procurement Department	2	2
Cafeteria Services	10	7
Printing Department	2	2
Total	**114**	**88**

The sample size formula developed by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) was used as follows.

$$n = \frac{X^2 \cdot N \cdot P(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 \cdot P(1-P)}$$

where:

n = required sample size
N = population size
P = population proportion (assumed to be 0.5 for maximum sample size)
d = degree of accuracy (margin of error), usually 0.05
X^2 = chi-square value for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level
At 95% confidence level, $X^2 = 3.841$

$$n = \frac{3.841 \times 114 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(114-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5(1-0.5)} = \frac{109.4685}{1.24275} = 88 \text{ employees}$$

A simple random sample was useful in this study to select participants from each stratum.

The study used a structured questionnaire to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was divided into four main sections: demographic information, emotional intelligence, employee engagement, and the influence of leaders' emotional intelligence on employee engagement. To measure emotional intelligence, the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (2002) was used. This tool assessed four key areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. To assess employee engagement, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was adopted. It evaluated four dimensions: vigor, dedication, absorption, and emotional commitment. Both standardized instruments used a 5-point Likert scale for the quantitative questions. In addition, open-ended qualitative questions were included to allow respondents to express personal views and experiences related to emotional intelligence and engagement while ensuring validity and reliability throughout the research process.

The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 21) was used during data analysis. The ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, freedom to withdraw from the study and no harm to the participants among others were strictly observed.
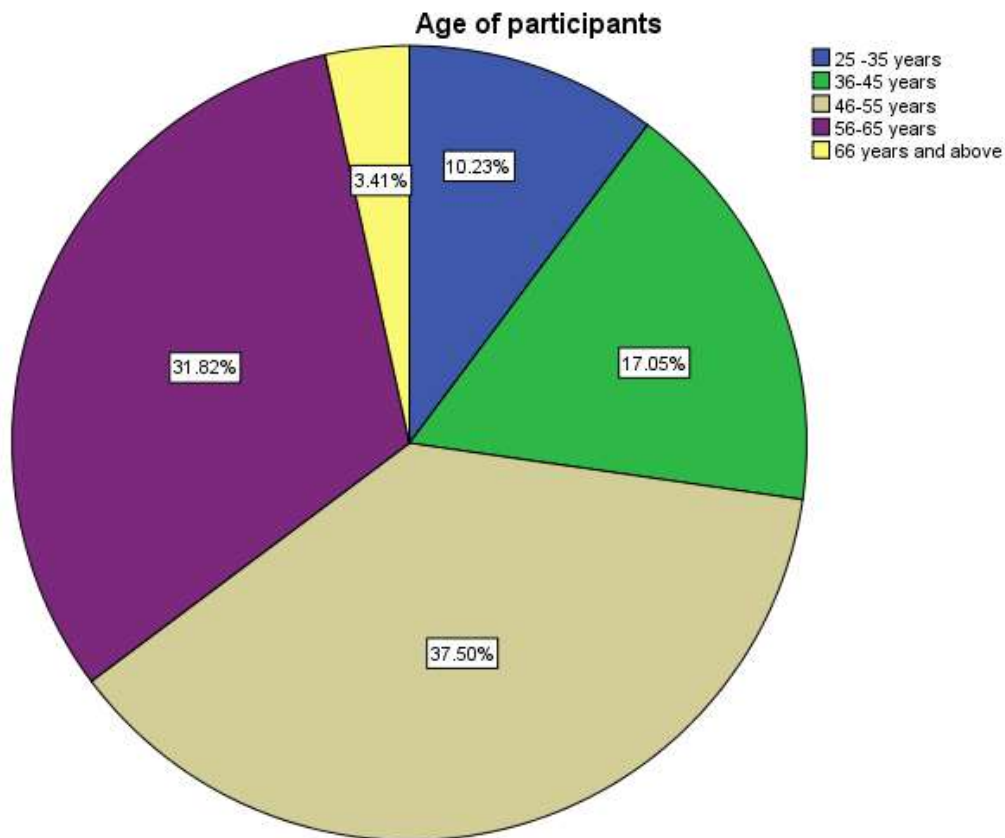
RESULTS

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents
The demographic characteristics included gender, age, highest academic qualification, current role at the university, and length of service.
Majority of respondents were female, representing 55.68% of the total sample, while male respondents accounted for 44.32%.

Figure 2*: Age of Participants*

As shown in Figure 2 above, the highest proportion of respondents (37.50%) was aged between 46 and 55 years. This was followed by those in the 56 to 65 years age bracket, who made up 31.82% of the total sample. These findings indicate that majority of respondents were in their mid to late career stages, suggesting a workforce with significant professional experience.

The study sought to establish the educational level of the respondents. Table 2 below gives the results.

Table 1*: Educational Level of Participants*

Education Level	Percentage (%)
Secondary Certificate	4.545%
Diploma	10.23%
Bachelor's Degree	18.18%
Master's Degree	9.091%
PhD	57.95%
Total	100%

As shown in Table 2 above, majority of the participants (57.95%) held a PhD qualification, and the minority of the participants (4.545%) held a secondary certificate. Participants were asked to identify their current roles within the institution. The roles were categorized into academic staff, administrative staff, and support staff. This classification was necessary to determine whether perceptions of leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement varied across different functional units within the university. The majority were academic staff accounting for 57.95%. This indicates that a significant portion of the workforce is engaged in instructional and scholarly duties. Administrative staff made up 27.27% of the respondents, highlighting their essential role in offering managerial and institutional support. Meanwhile, the supporting staff represent 14.77%, reflecting a smaller group involved in operational, maintenance, and clerical services. The length of time respondents had worked at Tangaza University was also examined. The results indicated a range of work experience, from recently hired employees to long-serving staff members. Understanding the distribution of work tenure allowed the study to explore whether the duration of employment influenced respondents' experiences and views regarding leadership and engagement within the institution. The data shows that majority of respondents, 76.14%, have been working at Tangaza for 1 to 10 years. A percentage of 21.59% have worked at Tangaza for 11 to 20 years. Only 2.27% of the respondents have worked at Tangaza for 21 to 30 years, showing that there are few very long-serving members of staff.

Assessment of emotional intelligence level among leaders at Tangaza University

Self- Awareness
Table 3 below shows the mean score and standard deviation, together with the interpretation of the scores on self-awareness items.

Table 3*: Mean score, standard deviation, and interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
My leader is aware of their own emotions even during tense situations	4.1477	.70368	Agree
My leader understands how their emotions affect their behaviors and decision-making	4.3864	.76462	Strongly Agree
My leader acknowledges their strengths and limitations.	4.3182	.70377	Strongly Agree
My leader takes time to reflect on their emotions	4.3636	.88645	Strongly Agree
My leader shows awareness of how their mood influences others.	4.1705	.86065	Agree

The data collected on the emotional intelligence of leaders in terms of self-awareness shows generally positive perceptions among respondents. All mean values range from 4.15 to 4.39, placing them in the "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" categories. The highest-rated item is "My leader understands how their emotions affect their behaviors and decision-making" (Mean = 4.39). The lowest-rated items were awareness of emotions during tense situations (Mean = 4.15) and awareness of how their mood influences others (Mean = 4.17).

Self-Management
Table 4 below summarizes the mean scores, standard deviations, and interpretation of the scores on self-management items.
Table 4: *Mean score, standard deviation, and interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
My leader remains calm under pressure.	4.0227	.93437	Agree
My leader controls their impulses even in emotionally charged situations.	4.3182	.83797	Strongly Agree
My leader maintains a positive outlook during challenges.	4.2386	.78776	Agree
My leader adapts well to change	4.5000	.69481	Strongly Agree
My leader keeps their commitments and follows through on responsibilities.	4.3636	.74559	Strongly Agree

All mean scores fall within the "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" range. The highest-rated item is "My leader adapts well to change" with a mean of 4.50, placing it firmly in the "Strongly Agree" category

Social-Awareness

Table 5*: Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores on social -awareness*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
My leader demonstrates empathy toward others	4.3864	.59561	Strongly Agree
My leader listens carefully to understand what others are feeling.	4.3750	.68334	Strongly Agree
My leader is aware of team dynamics and morale	4.3864	.70192	Strongly Agree
My leader can interpret non-verbal cues in social settings.	4.3864	.66836	Strongly Agree
My leader considers the needs and feelings of others when making decisions.	4.4205	.69019	Strongly Agree

All means scores for the five items range from 4.3750 to 4.4205, which falls within the ''Agree'' to ''Strongly Agree'' range. The highest-rated item is ''My leader considers the needs and feelings of others when making decisions'' with a mean of 4.4205.

Relationship Management

Table 6 below shows the mean score and standard deviation, together with the interpretation of the scores on relationship management items.

Table 6*: Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
My leader communicates clearly and effectively.	4.2955	.60949	Agree
My leader manages conflicts constructively.	4.3523	.69547	Strongly Agree
My leader builds strong and trusting relationships.	4.2955	.68076	Agree
My leader inspires and motivates others.	4.4773	.71079	Strongly Agree
My leader encourages collaboration and teamwork	4.4659	.71033	Strongly Agree

All mean scores across the five items range from 4.2955 to 4.4773, falling within the "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" range. The highest-rated item is "My leader inspires and motivates others" with a mean of 4.4773.

Overall mean scores on emotional intelligence

Table 7 shows the overall scores on emotional intelligence and its components.

Dimension	Overall mean score out of 5	Percentage score
Self-awareness	3.91	78.2%
Self-management	3.90	78%
Social awareness	3.88	77.6%
Relationship management	3.86	77.2%
Overall mean	3.89	77.8%

Therefore, the overall mean score for emotional intelligence is **3.89** indicating a generally high level of emotional intelligence.

Qualitative Results on Emotional Intelligence

The following themes were the most recurrent themes highlighted by the employees:

Theme 1: Improving Emotional Self-Awareness

Several respondents suggested leaders should engage in more self-reflection to understand their emotional states and how these influence their actions. One participant noted, "*They should reflect on their feelings before addressing sensitive issues with staff.*" Another recommended, "*Attend training on emotional intelligence to understand how moods influence decision-making.*"

Theme 2: Emotional Regulation Before Action

Participants highlighted the importance of pausing and managing emotions before making decisions, especially under pressure. As one respondent put it, "*Pause before making decisions when they're upset, so their emotions don't cloud their judgment.*"

Theme 3: Seeking Feedback for Growth

Some employees felt leaders should actively seek feedback to understand the impact of their emotional responses. One participant stated, "*Be open to feedback from the team about how their actions are perceived.*"

As far as enhancing leader-team relationships through empathy and support is concerned, the following were the most recurrent themes:

Theme 4: Showing Genuine Empathy

Many respondents suggested leaders should demonstrate more concern for staff well-being, both professionally and personally. For example, one participant shared, "*Spend more time checking in on how team members are coping with workload.*"

Theme 5: Strengthening Communication Transparency

Employees expressed a desire for leaders to explain decisions and keep teams informed. As one noted, "*Be transparent about decisions that affect us and explain the reasons behind them.*"

Theme 6: Recognizing and Valuing Contributions

Some participants emphasized the importance of acknowledging staff achievements. One employee commented, "*Offer encouragement and recognize achievements more often.*"

Theme 7: Building Approachability and Trust

A few respondents highlighted the need for leaders to be more accessible. As one stated, "*Be approachable so we feel comfortable sharing concerns.*"

Examination of employees' engagement level at Tangaza University
Employee Vigor

Table 8*: Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
I feel bursting with energy at work.	4.2045	.87309	Agree
I feel strong and vigorous while working.	4.5795	.60118	Strongly Agree
I am enthusiastic to start each working day.	4.5000	.66089	Strongly Agree
I can continue working for long periods without getting tired.	4.2273	1.09047	Agree
I feel mentally resilient at work.	4.3068	.71692	Strongly Agree

The mean scores for all five items range from 4.2045 to 4.5795, which fall within the "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" range.

Employee Dedication

Table 9*: Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
I find my work full of meaning and purpose.	4.6023	.55791	Strongly Agree
I am proud of the work I do.	4.6023	.55791	Strongly Agree
My job inspires me.	4.5568	.60378	Strongly Agree
I feel enthusiastic about my job.	4.5682	.60259	Strongly Agree
I am strongly involved in my work	4.6250	.57361	Strongly Agree

The mean scores range from 4.56 to 4.63.

Employee absorption

Table 10*: Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
I get carried away when I am working.	4.0455	1.12351	Agree
I feel immersed in my work.	4.2159	.97614	Agree
I forget everything else around me when I am working.	4.1591	1.12328	Agree
Time flies when I am working.	4.3636	.83297	Strongly Agree
I am completely focused when I am working.	4.4545	.74137	Strongly Agree

I get carried away when I am working" (M = 4.05) was rated lowest.

Employee Emotional Commitment

Table 11: *Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
I feel emotionally attached to my organization.	4.3864	.80846	Strongly Agree
I feel like part of a family at work.	4.2955	.69744	Strongly Agree
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my institution.	4.5682	.67459	Strongly Agree
I would feel a loss if I had to leave my organization.	4.1818	1.00052	Agree
I care deeply about the future of my organization.	4.5341	.75732	Strongly Agree

All statements show positive engagement with average responses in the "Agree" to "Strongly Agree" range. The highest-rated item is: "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my institution" (Mean = 4.57, Strongly Agree). The lowest-rated item is: "I would feel a loss if I had to leave my organization" (Mean = 4.18, Agree). This is the only item that did not reach the "Strongly Agree" category.

Overall scores on employee engagement

Table 12 shows the overall scores on employee engagement and its components.

Dimension	Overall mean score out of 5	Percentage score
Vigor	3.96	79.2%
Dedication	4.02	80.4%
Absorption	3.99	79.8%
Emotional Commitment	3.99	79.8%
Overall mean	3.99	79.8%

Therefore, the overall mean score for emotional engagement is **3.99** indicating a generally high level of engagement.

Qualitative Results on Employee Engagement
Theme 1: Recognition and Appreciation
Several respondents noted that receiving acknowledgement for their work would significantly boost their motivation. One participant stated, "*When leaders recognize our effort, even with a simple thank you, it encourages me to do more*."
Theme 2: Professional Development Opportunities
Many employees expressed a desire for more training and career growth initiatives. For example, one noted, "*Offering more workshops and courses related to my role would inspire me to work harder*."

Theme 3: Adequate Resources and Support
Some participants reported that better resources and fair workload distribution would help them maintain energy. One explained, "*We need enough staff and the right tools to manage our tasks effectively.*"

Theme 4: Well-being and Work-Life Balance
A few respondents mentioned flexible work arrangements or wellness initiatives. As one shared, "*Flexibility when dealing with personal matters would help me focus better.*"

Theme 5: Approachability and Empathy in Leadership
Many participants emphasized the need for leaders to be more approachable and concerned about employee well-being to strengthen engagement. One participant shared, "*It would help if leaders checked in on how we are coping, both in work and personal matters.*"

Theme 6: Transparent Communication
Respondents indicated that clear explanations for decisions would foster a stronger sense of trust. As one put it, "*Leaders should be transparent about decisions and share the reasons behind them.*"

Theme 7: Team-Building and Collaboration
Some employees felt that more team activities would strengthen workplace bonds and engagement. For instance, "*Regular team-building sessions would make us feel more connected to each other and the institution.*"

Theme 8: Fairness and Equity
A few respondents raised the need for fair treatment in promotions and assignments. One commented, "*Equal opportunities for everyone would make me more committed to staying.*"

Influence of Leaders' Emotional Intelligence on Employees' Engagement
Considering the Likert scales as continuous, the scores on employees' emotional intelligence and employees' engagement, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. The results demonstrated a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.85$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that higher emotional intelligence levels in leaders tends to be significantly associated with increased levels of employees' engagement. Based on the Pearson correlation analysis provided, the value of R squared is 0.7225. This means that approximately 72.25% of the variance in employee engagement can be explained by the variance in leaders' emotional intelligence.

Moderating variables

Institutional Culture

Table13: *Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
The leadership style in my department promotes open communication and mutual respect.	4.2500	0.69893	Agree
My leader's emotional intelligence contributes to a positive and inclusive institutional culture.	4.4432	0.74058	Strongly Agree
There is a strong sense of trust between leaders and employees in my department.	4.2841	0.69396	Agree
My leader actively promotes ethical behavior and emotional well-being in the workplace.	4.5568	0.64072	Strongly Agree
The institutional culture supports emotional awareness and empathy among staff.	4.2273	0.78385	Agree

The institutional culture supports emotional awareness and empathy (Mean = 4.23) shows agreement, but has the least mean.

Workload and Job Demand

Table 14: *Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
My leader is aware of the emotional impact of the workload on staff.	4.2955	.94879	Strongly Agree
My leader helps in managing job demands through clear communication and realistic expectations.	4.2159	.83664	Strongly Agree
The emotional intelligence of my leader helps reduce stress and burnout in the workplace.	4.2500	.87428	Strongly Agree
My leader ensures that workloads are fairly distributed and emotionally manageable,	4.1364	.77581	Agree
I feel supported by my leader during high-pressure periods.	4.2955	.79016	Strongly Agree

The lowest-rated item was "My leader ensures that workloads are fairly distributed and emotionally manageable" (M = 4.14).

Employee personality traits

Table 15: *Mean score, standard deviation, and Interpretation of the scores.*

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
My leader understands how different personalities respond to emotional situations.	4.1364	.81905	Agree
My leader adjusts their communication based on individual personality differences.	4.2841	.78709	Strongly Agree
The emotional intelligence of my leader helps create a respectful and accommodating work environment.	4.1591	.82888	Agree
My leader encourages employees to use their unique strengths and personalities at work.	4.3523	.75870	Strongly Agree
My leader encourages employees to use their unique strengths and personalities at work.	4.2841	.88342	Strongly Agree

"My leader understands how different personalities respond to emotional situations" was the least rated item.

Fostering an Emotionally Supportive and Inclusive University Culture to Enhance Engagement
Theme 1: Active Listening and Open Dialogue
Several participants emphasized the importance of leaders genuinely listening to staff ideas and concerns. One noted, "*Hold more open forums where we can share our thoughts without fear of judgment.*"
Theme 2: Fair and Inclusive Decision-Making
Respondents expressed a desire to be involved in decisions affecting their work. For example, "*Include staff from different departments when setting policies so everyone feels represented.*"
Theme 3: Recognition of Diversity and Respect for Differences
Some participants highlighted the need to acknowledge and respect diverse cultural, religious, and personality differences. One commented, "*Leaders should show they value different perspectives and ways of working.*"
Theme 4: Consistent Emotional Support
A few employees mentioned that leaders should provide steady encouragement and emotional backing, especially during challenging periods. One stated, "*It's important for leaders to check in regularly, not just when there's a problem.*"

Leader support for emotional well-being and individual recognition to enhance engagement

Theme 1: Personalized Workload Management

Many respondents suggested leaders should consider individual strengths, capacities, and personal situations when assigning tasks. One participant explained, "*Sometimes the workload feels the same for everyone, but our capacities and situations are differen*t."

Theme 2: Acknowledging Individual Strengths and Achievements

Employees valued recognition tailored to their contributions. As one noted, "*Notice the specific things I do well and acknowledge them, not just general praise.*"

Theme 3: Providing Flexibility and Autonomy

Some participants felt that being trusted to manage their own time and methods would reduce stress. One stated, "*Give me the freedom to plan my work according to my style and strengths*."

Theme 4: Offering Emotional Check-Ins During High Workload Periods

A few respondents recommended regular emotional support when demands are high. For example, "*Ask how I'm coping during peak seasons, not just about whether I've finished my tasks*."

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The study examined emotional intelligence (EI) among leaders at Tangaza University and found consistently high levels across self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Leaders were perceived as emotionally intelligent, particularly in understanding how emotions influence decisions, adapting to change, and demonstrating empathy and social perception. The findings agree with previous studies (Goleman, 1995; Iordanoglou, 2018: Mayer et al., 2008). While leaders generally showed strong self-awareness, certain gaps were noted in maintaining emotional control during tense situations and remaining calm under pressure (Côté *et al*., 2010), indicating areas for improvement in emotional regulation.

Employee engagement levels—measured through vigor, dedication, absorption, and emotional commitment—were found to be very high, with employees reporting strong motivation, enthusiasm, and focus as found by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004). Dedication indicators such as pride and enthusiasm were particularly strong, reflecting meaningful work and supportive leadership as advocated by Harter *et al*. (2002). However, variability in absorption and emotional commitment suggested that while employees feel energized, some experience challenges with sustained immersion or long-term attachment to the institution, aligning with distinctions between affective and continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The findings also confirmed that leaders' emotional intelligence significantly enhances institutional culture, workload management, and inclusivity which are important for employee engagement. Emotionally intelligent leadership promoted ethics, trust, and open communication (Mayer et al., 1995), increased support during high job demands (Wong & Law, 2002), and strengthened respect for individual personality traits (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Nonetheless, inconsistencies in workload distribution and variability in emotional responsiveness indicated that

the positive effects of EI were not uniform across all departments, suggesting the need for more structured and inclusive EI practices.

Finally, the study contributed to theoretical refinement of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory and Kahn's Psychological Conditions of Engagement. The results underscored the particularly strong influence of relational emotional intelligence competencies - empathy and interpersonal communication- on engagement (Cherniss, 2010), suggesting that Goleman's model could better emphasize relational dynamics and organizational culture. Similarly, findings showed that leaders' emotional intelligence directly shapes psychological safety and meaningfulness at work (May et al., 2004), indicating that emotional intelligence should be explicitly integrated into Kahn's model as a key antecedent. Overall, while leadership at Tangaza University demonstrates strong emotional intelligence that boosts engagement, targeted improvements in stress management, fairness in workloads, and personalized support could further strengthen employee commitment and institutional performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that leaders at Tangaza University demonstrate a relatively high level of emotional intelligence, with a mean score of 3.89 (SD = 0.62), and that employees exhibit a correspondingly high level of engagement, with a mean score of 3.99 (SD = 0.58). The strong positive correlation (r = 0.85) between leaders' emotional intelligence and employee engagement indicates that leaders' abilities in self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management significantly influence employees' enthusiasm, dedication, focus, and emotional attachment to their work. Contextual factors such as institutional culture, workload, and individual personality traits further shape this relationship, highlighting that emotionally intelligent leadership is a critical determinant of employee engagement and overall institutional performance at Tangaza University.

To sustain and enhance these positive outcomes, the study recommends that Tangaza University should continue investing in leadership development programs that focus on advanced emotional intelligence skills, including empathy, social awareness, stress management, and relationship management. The university should also maintain high employee engagement by consistently recognizing and rewarding contributions, checking on fairness in workloads, fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment, and actively soliciting feedback to address emerging challenges. Prioritizing emotional intelligence development in leaders not only strengthens leadership effectiveness but also serves as a strategic approach to sustaining and boosting employee engagement, thereby improving institutional performance and long-term organizational success. For further research, the study recommends longitudinal action research on emotional intelligence and employee engagement at Tangaza University and other institutions.

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