



# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN CALABAR SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of Emotional Intelligence on Teachers' Job Performance in Primary Schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. One research question was posed and one hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. Literature related to the variable was reviewed accordingly. Correlation design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 3,359 teachers while the sample of the study was 739. The instrument used for data collection was constructed by the researcher and titled: "Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance Questionnaire (EIJPQ)". The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method which gave coefficients ranging from .70 to .81. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (simple regression) at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that empathy predicted teachers job performance in the area under study. Teachers with high emotional intelligence skills such as; empathy performed maximally well in their jobs. Based on this result, it was concluded that stakeholders in the education sector should organize and encourage primary school teachers to be more empathetic in relating to learners. It was hence recommended that emotional intelligence training programs should be organized for primary school teachers at different times for a more effective job performance.

**KEYWORDS:** Emotional intelligence, teacher' job performance, empathy, primary schools, Cross River State.

## INTRODUCTION

The progress of a nation can be seen in the quality of her educational system which is attributed to the behaviour of the entire citizenry as most people go through the primary level of education. Education is a determinant factor of a nation's progress and it is evident in some countries, Finland for example, made significant educational reforms which included the introduction of compulsory education which made education accessible to all [Tarhan et al 2019]. This made them to experience rapid industrialization and urbanization, leading to a growing demand for skilled workers. During this time, Finland prioritized the professionalization of teaching, teacher training became rigorous and only top candidates were selected.

This helped to elevate the status of teachers and contribute to the overall quality of education. Also, Singapore's investment in its educational sector has been a pivotal factor in its rapid economic development and global competitiveness. After gaining independence from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore prioritized education as a key pillar of nation building. The government recognized that a well educated workforce was crucial for economic growth and development, and as such they invested heavily in infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development whose focus was on standardized and rigorous educational system. Apparently, a nation that aspires to develop should formulate outstanding educational policies, and make significant investment on her educational system.

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Unfortunately, numerous studies underscore the pivotal roles of teachers in most underdeveloped Countries like Nigeria. The performance of teachers significantly affects the learning outcome of students [Sucuo-Glu and Ulu 2022]. Teachers' job performance greatly impacts students' success, satisfaction, and the classroom climate. (Haldimann et al, 2023). According to Darling-Hammond and Bradsford (2005), the teacher is the centre stage of any educational programme. This emphasizes the role of teachers in the educational system and the need for comprehensive preparation to meet the diverse demands of teaching. In Nigeria, the teaching profession has witnessed various setbacks, ranging from recruitment of unqualified teachers to insufficient remuneration among others. These setbacks have made the profession unenthusiastic for the best brains. Research identifies various factors contributing to poor teacher's performance including inadequate human resource development, working conditions, remuneration, and interpersonal relationship within teachers and learners in our public schools in Cross River State (Ayuba, Abdulrazaq Olayiwola, 2023). Lack of commitment among teachers has greatly affected academic outcome in public schools. Most teachers are dissatisfied with work place conditions, evidence through resignation and absenteeism. These negative attitudes of teachers have greatly impacted on the effectiveness and efficiency with which they carry out their assigned tasks and responsibilities within a work environment (Muchinsky, 2012). Teachers' job performance involves various aspects such as instructional effectiveness, classroom management, student engagement, assessment practices and professional development. It is often assessed through classroom observations, student outcomes, and other evaluation methods.

Therefore, understanding the factors that impact teachers' job performance is of great importance. The government, international organizations and other stakeholders in the education sector have made effort towards improving teachers' job performance through such activities as organizing workshops and seminars for teachers, construction and modernization of classrooms, purchase and distribution of learning materials to schools, compulsory possession of Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria Certificate (TRCN) by teachers, yet students' performance seem not to have improved which have been directly and indirectly linked to teachers' job performance. According to Darling-Hammond (2000), teachers' quality influences student outcome and contributes significantly to students' achievement as such there is need to make policies that attract and retain high quality teachers by way of providing adequate training, support and professional development.

Understanding how emotional intelligence influences teachers' job performance in Nigeria can contribute to the development of targeted interventions, training programmes, and policy recommendations aimed at enhancing overall teacher effectiveness. The research can also shed light on the importance of emotional intelligence as a prerequisite for teachers to effectively engage with their students, manage classroom dynamics and create conducive learning environments that promotes students' holistic development.

Emotional intelligence is the awareness of ones' action and feeling and how they influence people around them. Emotional intelligence helps teachers to have value for students and listen to their complaints and challenges, and to be able to empathize, regulate, identify and communicate with them at different levels. Emotional intelligence is therefore defined as the ability to perceive, access and generate emotions and emotional knowledge and reflectively regulate emotion to prompt emotional and intellectual development (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2002). It takes emotional intelligence to be able to handle our emotions in the right order in our daily encounters. To be intelligent in this light puts emotion at the centre of aptitude for living, and bringing intelligence into our emotions is called emotional intelligence; that is being able, for instance to control emotional impulses to read another's innermost feeling and to handle relationships smoothly. Emotional intelligence is important in teaching and practical life as it helps the teacher to adapt to circumstances and motivate them for self-actualization. Teachers who are emotionally intelligent seems to have better communication skills with students and colleagues. Emotions are crucial ingredients for optimal information processing, social communication, written communication, motivation, attention, critical thinking skills, behaviour and physical health in our everyday survival (Isangedighi, 2007). Thus, the need for teachers to be emotionally intelligent.

Moreover, emotional intelligence skills enable people to reduce negative stress in their life, build healthy relationships, communicate effectively and develop their life. These are important at each stage of development. Nelson and Law (2015) identified the need for empathy when they stated that the qualitative, holistic, emotive and subjective experience of people are critical to healthy development. Many researchers are of the opinion that the problem of poor teachers' job performance is lack of empathy Onyinloye (2005). He asserted that teachers who lack emotional skills as earlier stated show some adjustive challenges or in some ways fail to handle effectively the demands of the profession.

Several studies like Fernandes and Rego (2004) and Onyinloye (2005) have laid emphasis on emotional intelligence skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, self motivation, empathy, social skills and job performance of teachers, stating that for an effective teachers' performance, a positive emotional skills must be imbibed by the teachers which will in turn motivate the learners to feel secure with the teachers and inspire them to learn.

This study is based on Goleman's five dimensions of emotional intelligence. According to Goleman (2011), the dimensions of emotional intelligence are; self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy and social skills. For this study our focus will be solely on empathy.

A dimension of emotional intelligence is empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand how others feel. It also involves ones' responses to peoples' needs based on information and observation. Esienberg and Fabes (2010) opined that those competent in this area are able to sense the problems of others, understand how the problem influence their feelings and behaviours and work towards helping them to alleviate their problems. Researchers consistently affirm the positive relationship between teachers' job performance and emotional intelligence.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Ability based model of emotional intelligence by Mayer and Salovey (1997).

This model was proposed by Mayer and Salovey in 1997, following their definition of emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive and integrate emotions to facilitate thoughts, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth. According to Mayer and Salovey, emotions are considered as useful sources of information that help one understand and harness their social environment. The model proposes that individuals vary in their ability to process information of an emotional nature and in their ability to relate emotional processing to a wider cognition. These abilities are seen to manifest themselves in certain adaptive behaviours. This model proposes that emotional intelligence include four types of abilities:

i. Perceiving emotion implies the ability to detect and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices and cultural artifacts including the ability to identify one's own emotions. Perceiving emotion represents a basic aspect of emotional intelligence as it makes all other processing of emotional information possible. ii. Using emotion indicate the ability to harness emotions to facilitate various activities such as thinking and problem solving. The emotionally intelligent person can capitalize fully upon his/her changing mood in order to best fit the task at hand. iii. Understanding emotions suggest the ability to comprehend emotional language and to appreciate complicated relationship among emotions. For example, understanding emotion encompasses the

ii. ability to be sensitive to slight variations between emotions, and the ability to recognize and describe how emotions evolve over time. iv. Managing emotion implies the ability to regulate emotion in both ourselves and in others. The emotional intelligent person can harness even negative emotions, and manage them to achieve intended goals. The implication of this model to the present study is that there are individual differences in emotional intelligence relating to differences in our abilities to perceive, use, understand and manage our own emotions and those of others. Teachers who have a high degree of emotional intelligence in terms of perceiving emotions, using emotion, understanding emotion and managing emotions would function well in relating with students and other teachers.

Purpose of the study: Specifically, the study sought to determine if empathy predicts teachers' job performance.

**Research Question:** To what extent does empathy predict teachers' job performance?

Statement of the hypothesis: empathy does not significantly predict teachers' job performance

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Singh (2014) with the aim of determining the need to develop empathy as a social skill of emotionally intelligent teacher used quantitative research method in the study. The findings suggested that teachers must develop their social skill of empathy as part of their job behaviour. Teachers who intentionally use empathy in relating with the learners tend to reduce anxiety and tension in the classroom. Evidently, expressing empathy in the organization requires the employee to thoughtfully consider everyone's feelings in the process of making intelligent decisions. This study affirmed that an employee who has developed a sense of empathy would have a much better understanding of how to handle different situations which could range from dealing with underachieving learners to working with gifted pupils.

Tadayon, Zohoorian and Hooshmand (2023) carried out a study aimed at presenting a comprehensive model elucidating the interrelationships among teachers' effectiveness, empathy, and emotional intelligence, employing structural equation modeling (SEM) as the analytical approach. Accordingly, a sample of 201 English teachers at the institutional level from different cities in Iran participated in a quantitative correlational study. The results of Pearson correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant yet weak positive association between Emotional Intelligence and empathy. Moreover, empathy exhibited a positive and significant correlation with teachers' effectiveness. The findings further indicated a moderate positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence and effectiveness. Additionally, a positive path was observed connecting Emotional Intelligence and Empathy.

Furthermore, both empathy and Emotional Intelligence were found to be predictive of teachers' effectiveness. Similarly, Celikkaleli and Okmen (2021) carried out a study to reveal whether or not empathetic tendency, teaching competence belief, and job satisfaction predict attitudes towards the teaching profession. The correlational research model was used. Data were collected from 316 teachers with an average age of 40.34 (SD = 3.15) years old, of which 189 were female (59.8%) and 127 (40.2%) male. The Attitude Scale towards Teaching Profession, Empathic Tendency Scale, Ohio Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, and the Job Satisfaction Scale were used as the study's data collection tools. According to the first findings obtained from the research, while teachers' attitudes towards teaching did not differ according to gender, education level (primary/secondary school), or school location (urban or rural); they were found to differ according to their length of experience. Accordingly, the attitudes of teachers with a seniority of more than 20 years were shown to be more positive than those with less experience. Second, empathic tendency, belief in teaching self-efficacy, and also job satisfaction were found to positively and significantly predict attitude towards the teaching profession. Within the framework of the findings, it was concluded that gender, education level and school location were not determining variables in teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession. On the other hand, it was concluded that work experience is important in the attitude towards the profession. Finally, it was concluded that self-efficacy belief towards the teaching profession and job satisfaction are important variables in the attitude towards teaching. The obtained findings were then discussed, interpreted, and recommendations were made.

In a related study, Yakubu and Afolabi (2020) assessed head-teachers' communication styles on teacher's job performance in primary schools in Sabon Gari local government area of Kaduna State. The study employed the use of descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study was made up of 87 head teachers, 1,850 teachers and 5 education officials in Sabon Gari Local Government, Kaduna State. A sample size of nine (9) head-teacher, one hundred and eighty five (185) teachers and five (5) education officials were sampled from Sabon Gari Local Government, Kaduna State, making the total of one hundred and ninety nine (199) respondents, used in the study. The sample size of head teachers and teachers represented 10% of the entire population while the entire number of education officials was used the way they are due to the manageable size. The instrument titled "head-teachers' communication styles questionnaire (HCSQ) was used for data collection in the study. The validated instrument was pilot tested, the data collected from the pilot study was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha statistics and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. The data

collected in the study was analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that head-teachers' aggressive communication style negatively influence on teachers job performance in primary schools in Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Head-teachers' assertive communication style, open communication style, and inclusive communication style all had positive influence on teachers job performance in primary schools in Sabon Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Recommendations made include that there should be constant in-service training for head teachers on positive verbal and non-verbal communication styles. This will equip the head teachers with the essential skills for guiding teachers with respect to their job performance.

Akpevwoghene and Jamabo (2022) investigated the relationship among the self-motivation, empathy, social skill and job satisfaction among Anglican Clergymen. The study adopted a correlational survey design. The study covered the five dioceses that were created from the old Warri diocese of Bayelsa and Delta States. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses were raised and formulated to guide the study. The entire study population of 528 clergies were used. The research instrument that was used is a four-point Likert type questionnaire titled "self-motivation, empathy, social skill and Job Satisfaction of Clergy Scale" (SESJSS). Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to estimate the reliability of the instrument and the following reliability coefficients ( $r$ ) of 0.871 for self-motivation, 0.873 for empathy, 0.921 for social skills and 0.911 for clergy job satisfaction were obtained, while regression statistics was used to analyze data to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. From the data analysis, it was found that self-motivation, empathy and social skills are significantly related to job satisfaction of Anglican Clergies. Based on these findings the following recommendations was made: Clergies should be trained on self-motivation, empathy and social relations. Although clergies are counsellors in some form, but they are not trained in the art of usage of psychological principles, as such, refresher courses on psychological approaches to counselling should be given to them; and the church should create a counselling unit and a professional counsellor be engaged to assist the clergy.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the Correlational design. The area covered in this study was Calabar South Local Government Area. Calabar South is one of the eighteen local government areas of Cross River State. Calabar South is located in the southern senatorial district of the state.

Its geography coordinates are between latitude 5032' and 4027' North and longitude 7050 and 9028 East. It is bounded in the north by Calabar Municipality, south by Bakassi, in the east by Akpabuyo and west by Odukpani. It lies within the tropical region of Nigeria and has both dry and wet seasons. This area experiences heavy rainfall as it is close to the Atlantic Ocean. Based on the report gathered from the office of National Population Commission (2022), Calabar South has an estimated population of 291700 people. Two institutions of higher learning are situated in Calabar South; University of Calabar and University of Cross River State. Calabar South has fifteen public secondary schools and twenty-one public primary schools. The major ethnic groups in Calabar South are the Efik and Efut, and the predominant religion in the area is Christianity, few inhabitants and indigenes are Muslims and traditional worshippers. The major occupation of the people of Calabar South are petty trading, civil service, fishing and farming.

The population for the study comprised 3359 teachers, in public primary schools in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The sample used was 739 teachers (participants). Simple Random Sampling technique was used in selecting the teachers for this study. The instrument for data collection for this study was constructed by the researcher and titled "Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance Questionnaire (EIJPQ)". The questionnaire consisted of two sections; A and B. Section A collected responses on the respondents' demographic data, while section B elicited from the respondents, information on emotional intelligence sub-variables such as; empathy. Prior to the response on each of the items of the questionnaire, the respondents were requested to respond to the items of the questionnaire as it may appeal to them in the options. Thus, 25 items of the questionnaire were constructed with respect to emotional intelligence sub-variables, while 5 items were constructed with respect to empathy, totaling 30 items. The questionnaire consisted of positively and negatively worded statements. The scale was a 4point Likert type scale

with the weight of 4 to 1, representing; Strongly Agree (SD) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. For positively worded items while the scoring was reversed for negatively worded items. To ensure that the instrument measured the variables it was intended to measure, a draft of the EIJPQ was subjected to face validity. This was achieved by presenting it to one expert in Measurement Unit and one other in Educational Psychology Unit all in the department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar. The experts checked the suitability of language used for the items, clarity, relevance of items to the study and total coverage. Their criticisms, corrections and recommendations were incorporated in the draft of the instrument and was confirmed valid for the study by the said experts.

The reliability of the EIJPQ was determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. This was achieved by administering it to 50 learners of other schools in the research area who were not part of the research sample. Data collected were analyzed to determine the internal consistency for the subscales of the instrument. The reliability coefficient ranged from 0.70 to 0.81.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

General description of research variables

The main purpose of this study was to examine if emotional intelligence variables predicted public primary school teachers' job performance in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The independent variable of the study was empathy, while the dependent variable was teachers' job performance. Table 1 show the mean and standard deviation of the variable used for the study.

The hypothesis was restated and was followed by tabular presentation of result, and then the presented result interpreted to test the stated hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Empathy does not significantly predict teachers' job performance in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The independent variable is empathy and the dependent variable is teachers' job performance. The simple regression statistics was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, the result is presented in Table 2.

**Table 1:** General description of variable of study

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Empathy	739	12.48	3.02
Teacher job performance	739	11.61	3.97

The result of simple regression analysis in Table 2 on the relationship between empathy and teachers' job performance produced an adjusted  $R^2$  of .07. This result implies that 7 percent of the variance could be attributed to the independent variable (empathy) in predicting teachers' job performance.

The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F = 59.68$ , having a p-value of  $<.001$  with 1 and 737 degrees of freedom at .05 level of significance. Since  $p (<.001)$  is lesser than  $p (.05)$ , the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore signifies that empathy significantly predicted primary school teachers' job performance by 7 percent.

**TABLE 2:** Summary of data and simple regression analysis of the prediction between Empathy and Teachers' job performance in Calabar South, Cross River State

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Teachers' Error of the Estimate		
.27	.08	.07	3.83		
Model	Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	873.30	1	873.30	59.68	.000
Residual	10784.24	737	14.63		
Total	11657.54	738			

Predictors: Constant: Empathy; Dependent Variable: Teachers' job performance Significant at  $p < 0.05$

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Here is the discussion of finding that emerged from the analysis of the study. The discussion is presented as follows; Empathy and primary school teachers' job performance. The result of the analysis of the hypothesis revealed that Empathy predicted public primary school teachers' job performance in Calabar South, Cross River State. This implies that teachers with high empathy are likely to perform well in their job. This can be attributed to the fact that when teachers have the ability to perceive and be sensitive to their feelings and that of the learners in order to improve psychological wellbeing, they will definitely know how best to manage their ability in instructional practices, classroom management, students' engagement, communication, content knowledge and students' outcomes.

The finding is in support of the study of Tadayon, Zohorian and Hooshmand (2023) who carried out a study aiming at presenting a comprehensive model elucidating the interrelationships among teachers' effectiveness, empathy, and emotional intelligence, employing structural equation modeling (SEM) as the analytical approach. The result revealed that both empathy and emotional intelligence were found to be predictive of teachers' effectiveness. The finding of this study is also in agreement with the study of Celikkaleli and Okmen (2021) who carried out their study to reveal whether or not empathic tendency, teaching competence belief, and job satisfaction predict attitudes towards the teaching profession, the result revealed that empathic tendency, belief in teaching self-efficacy, and also job satisfaction were

found to positively and significantly predict attitude towards the teaching profession.

### CONCLUSION

The study reveals that there is an important connection between teachers' job performance and empathy of public primary school in Cross River State. Teachers with empathetic tendencies are likely to perform better in their jobs than those without empathetic tendencies. When teachers have the ability to perceive and are sensitive to their feelings and that of the learners, it enhances the psychological wellbeing of the social classroom climate.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Teachers should be exposed to emotional intelligence training programme with view to enhancing their job performance.
- ii. Teachers should be taught how empathic tendency can enhance positive relationship with learners thus making their job performance better.

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