

DYNAMICS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH SOUTH, NIGERIA.

Ogbeta-Ogwu Mercy Ese (Ph.D)
Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This study examined emotional intelligence and students' academic performance in selected universities in South South, Nigeria. This study specifically sought to explore the nature of relationship between empathy and students' relationship of shared responsibility/enthusiasm in Nigerian universities and to examine the nature of relationship between emotional support and academic motivation in Nigerian universities. Data for the study were collected from a sample of 383 undergraduate and final year students in the focused Nigerian universities. A structured questionnaire was developed and data were analyzed using correlation and regression analysis which was used to determine the explaining power of emotional intelligence over students' academic performance. Among others, it was found that empathy has weak and statistically negative significance in relation to students' academic performance with Adj. r^2 value = $-.001$, Beta = $.038$, p -value >0.05 ($.393$); and it was also reported that there is a significant and positive difference between emotional support and academic motivation. (Adj. R^2 = $.012$ or 12% , Beta = 12% , $p < .019$). The results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and students' academic performance. Therefore, on the basis of the results obtained, this study concludes that emotional intelligence of students is positively attuned with students' academic performance though the strength of the relationship between the study variables and emotional intelligence seemed to be a weak one. The study thus recommends amongst others that since emotional intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, empathy should be the mantra for all lecturers and students. And that Nigerian universities should focus on aspects of emotional support from friends, lecturers, social networks, family and others as revealed in the study to develop highly emotionally intelligent students to help them thrive academically and improve learning and to enable them correct the grave imperfections in the university system.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, empathy, emotional support system, academic performance*

INTRODUCTION

The academic environment dynamics have made the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) to be crucial for enhancing academic performance (AP) among Nigerian university students (Ononye, Ogbeta, Ndudi, Bereprebofa & Maduemezia, 2022). Generally, intelligence is usually associated with being high on academic and intellectual abilities but this seems to be a mistaken view, unproven and therefore incomplete. Recent studies are beginning to develop new and broader perspective of intelligence that goes beyond general intelligence to embrace novel aspects like emotional factors (Pérez and Castejón, 2020; Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts, 2017; Van, Onraet, Haesevoets, Roets: Fontaine, 2019; Mayer, David, Caruso and Salovey, 2016). Hence, producing the brightest experts no longer seems to be enough as emotional intelligence is rarely given due emphasis in Nigerian universities. Emotional intelligence is a confluence of developed abilities to (1) know and value self (2) build and maintain a variety of strong, productive and healthy relationships (3) get along and work well with others in achieving positive results; (4) and effectively coping with the stressors and demands of everyday life and work. Improving one's emotional intelligence no doubt has become a deliberate, active, and engaging process (Nelson, & Low, 2003) cited in Adegboyega (2019).

Nevertheless, emotions are important in students' behaviour and academic performance because these guide them as humans, helps to nurture their relationship with lecturers, their academic requirements, and orient their abilities and decision-making processes within and outside the university environment. Emotion interacts with the cognitive processes, how we think about an issue or situation (Adegboyega, 2019). Therefore, emotional intelligence cannot be enhanced without a clear commitment to changing one's thinking and behaviour through training and development. Emotional has been identified as one of the critical success factors affecting students' personal and academic life. Thus, there is a call to improve the emotional competencies of students so that they can be academically successful (Santos et al., 2021) in (Ononye, et al, 2022). Emotional intelligence provides students with the skills they need to successfully navigate academic life (Ngondi, Khasakhala and Yugi (2020), in order to be both emotionally and academically prepared to compete for knowledge and technology-driven economy after graduation.

The first year students seem to be in a transition period of increased independence during which they begin to interact and more with peers. The first year and the final year students progress through a period of transition from secondary less with their parents school to higher education with attendant complexities and this appears to be a turning point in their lives. This is a period of emotional upheavals characterized by emotional storms and stress as their emotions are very intense. And their inability to deal with themselves in their emotional highs and lows may likely have some resultant effect and/or serious repercussions on their personality, academic goals and future life as a whole (Erum and Zahoor, 2011).

But all round development and graduation of students is not possible without the emotional support system, cognitive understanding and control over emotions (Bikash, Samayita and Sunil (2021). A major problem is that it has been observed that most Nigerian universities seem to emphasize on improving intelligence quotient, focus only on conventional knowledge while deemphasizing and relegating emotional and social intelligence to the background. It is believed that Nigerian universities may not attain much if they continue to relegate emotional intelligence to the background.

Again, Intelligence quotient (IQ) was regarded to be a good predictor of academic performance. But extant studies, have however, shown that intelligence quotient alone is not a reliable predictor of academic performance (Craggs, 2005 in Akmal 2013). This erroneous perspective can be evident in the lack of clarity about what it takes to succeed academically in Nigerian universities, despite hard work and attention to personal studies. Academia, parents, students, school administrators, and the general public are all gravely concerned about poor performance in examinations in Nigerian universities (Kurumeh and Imoko, 2008; Moseri, Onwuka and Iweka, 2010; Iyi, 2011). This degrading poor academic performance in Nigerian universities, according to Oyinloye (2005), seems to be caused by a lack of emotional intelligence among students. He argues that students who lack emotional intelligence face difficulties and are unable to cope successfully with the demands of academic life in Nigerian universities. This situation can affect the employability of potential graduates (Ononye, et. al, 2022).

Lack of academic interactions, distractibility, students' learning capabilities, parental background, peer influence, not taking class notes, inadequate preparation for examinations, poor learning infrastructures, communication gap with lecturers, attitude towards attendance in class, parents' constant disagreements inadequate emotional support, and many others can pose a major challenge to Nigerian students. Academic comprehension has always been a source of anxiety, it appears that the only thing that matters after examinations is the grade, grade points average (GPA) and percentage of the results. As a result, students are forced to cram in order to pass their exams.

Also, numerous emotional imbalances emerge, such as stress, depression, anxiety, worries, and anxiety. Hence being able to recognize and control feelings has been demonstrated in extant studies to be far more valuable than being intelligent. Possibly because positive feelings such as happiness, appreciation, pride, amusement, inspiration, amazement, and love can help students achieve their academic goals (Joshi, Srivastava and Raychaudhuri, 2012). Emotional Intelligence therefore has wide-ranging benefits for learning, relationships, and wellness (Six Seconds, Emotional Intelligence Network, 2013) cited in (Adegboye 2019).

It is against this backdrop that academics are beginning to recognize that when emotional intelligence skills and capabilities are not ingrained in school culture, students suffer emotionally, academically, psychologically and physically (Azimifar, 2013). Students are usually subjected to a variety of pressures that appeal to their emotions, either directly or indirectly (Anton, 2014). Hence emotional intelligence may influence how well students comprehend and express themselves, as well as how well they understand and cope with everyday academic stressors in the university environment (Bar-On, 2006).

Nonetheless, it is yet to be established in Nigerian universities as to whether or not empathy and emotional support of students have any symbiotic relationship with study habits, academic research culture, relationships of shared enthusiasm and responsibility and graduation rate. It is against this backdrop, that this study seeks to determine the nature of relationship existing between emotional intelligence and students' academic performance in selected universities in south south Nigeria.

It is argued that crucial aspects of students' emotional factors as self-emotion evaluation, empathy, emotional reasoning, emotional resilience and emotional support have been given a hazy attention and strapped to the background. Although, universities strive to develop students' full personalities to aid graduates in their future endeavours. Students require more than what can be provided in a classroom lecture, which many people are unaware of. Faculty members rarely have time to train students and

willingly assist them in gaining abilities, continuous assessment tests, presentations and examinations are all challenging and difficult academic tasks and activities. Examination stress, missing class lectures, and cognitive misunderstandings, severe emotional pressures as a result of long walks to school, bad school environments, harsh treatment by lecturers, and being raised by unmotivated parents/guardians are all common challenges that students are confronted with. Students who experience disappointment, failure, and worry as a result of these and other factors would significantly be impacted emotionally and intellectually if left unchecked. Thus, understanding the powerful role of emotions in the lives of students in Nigerian universities has become imperative for academic researchers and social scientists.

Objectives of the Study

This study evaluated the influence of emotional intelligence on students' academic performance in selected Nigerian universities. However, to achieve this, the study specifically sought to:

- i. ascertain the strength of relationship between empathy and graduation rates in Nigerian universities.
- ii. examine the nature of relationship between emotional support and academic motivation in Nigerian universities.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) could be defined as the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour and to manage and/or adjust emotions to

adapt to environments or achieve one's goals (Coleman, 2008). Emotional intelligence is a psychological construct which has to do with capability of an individual to motivate, control impulse and delay gratification, to adjust one's mood and remove distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathize and to hope (Duygulu, Hicdurmaz and Akar, 2011; Mahmood Abdel-Dayem and Mousa 2013; Corina, 2011). In general, a student's academic performance is frequently linked to high levels of physical intelligence, whereas the critical aspects of emotional intelligence is stereotypically overlooked. An important aspect of emotional intelligence like empathy which aids in building up effective relationships within and outside the school environment helps to navigate the school life seamlessly.

The concept of emotional intelligence was first described by Salovey and Mayer more than two decades ago (Saha, 2017). The first dimension of Emotional intelligence described by Salovey et al. in generating an appropriate response to stressful situations is perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions (Salovey, & Mayer, 2002). These different dimensions of emotional intelligence are likely to influence the academic and professional success. The students learn in a high-stress environment created by a multitude of factors and having to interact with different persons in the academic environment. High level of stress and psychological distress among business students has been shown to be a driving force for the emotionally intelligent students. Studies have shown that higher emotional intelligence is associated with lower levels of stress and better coping ability among business students and other lecturers (Aremu and Tella, 2007; Kalapriya and Anuradha, 2015; Roy, Sinha and Suman, 2013). The different dimensions of emotional intelligence help an individual to function effectively in a stressful environment.

Summarily, emotional intelligence represents an ability to validly reason with emotions and using emotions to enhance thoughts Chamundeswari (2013). There are number of studies from different populations showing that emotional intelligence is related to academic and professional success in many fields (Adetayo and Kiadese, (2011); Lawrence and Deepa, (2013); Ghosh, (2014); Fish, (2012); Kianfar, Cherati and Enayati, (2015); Nwadinigwe, and Azuka-Obieke, (2012). Individuals with higher emotional intelligence are perceived to have better interpersonal relationships and considered by their peers to be more affable (Jenaabadi, 2014). The positive relationships could affect general intellectual development positively which ultimately leads to higher academic performance (Khajehpour, (2011); Dubey, (2008). A study done in a group of undergraduate students in USA demonstrated that emotional intelligence was associated with performance beyond one's general intellectual abilities (Vandana, Jadhav and Patil, 2010).

Research has found an association between emotional intelligence and achieving academic success (Cherry, 2018). High emotionally intelligent students are more likely to stay in school and graduate (Mishra, 2012). University students with higher emotional intelligence are more pleasant, integrate more readily into society, and are less conflictual (Brackett, Rivers, Salovey, 2011). These enhanced social and emotional abilities translate into enhanced cognitive capacities and high-quality connections, resulting in higher academic performance (Schutte, Malouff, Bobik, Coston, Greeson, Jedlicka, Rhodes, Wendorf, 2001). Pool and Qualter (2012) pointed out that students with high emotional intelligence have better school attendance records, their classroom behaviour is more constructive and less often disruptive and they like being more studious, and are less likely to be suspended or otherwise disciplined

Empathy

Understanding emotions is a dimension of emotional intelligence which includes the ability to be sensitive to own emotions and emotions of the others. This is an attribute that inculcates empathy which in turn helps to build up better interpersonal relationships. Having good interpersonal

relationships with patients as well as with the ward staff is crucial for medical students to gain the maximum out of their clinical training. Cooper (2010), defined empathy as the most powerful aspect for the development of learning relationships and achievement of students. Empathy is often communicated nonverbally through facial expressions and body language (Wang, 2014).

Empathy in this context characterizes understanding students, helping students, developing students' potential, service orientation, leveraging diversity, political awareness, and caring for students in various capacities which are important for developing talented students. However, trustworthy individuals are forthright about their own mistakes and confront others about their lapses. A deficit in this ability operates as a career derailer (Goleman, 1998b). When you possess strong social skills, you effortlessly form relationships with your peers, as well as manage them correctly rather than grappling with it. It sometimes requires one to combine taking the students' viewpoint and showing appropriate assertiveness in order to steer the students toward excelling in their examinations. Their ability to read situations objectively, without the distorting lens of their own biases and assumptions, allows them to respond effectively (Boyatzis, 1982). Mayer and his colleagues (2000) claim that high ability in one area (e.g., showing empathy) can positively affect the performance in another area (e.g., study habits, academic culture, etc).

Emotions are functional when the information communicated through emotions is attended to, interpreted accurately, integrated into thinking and behaviour, and managed effectively (Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey, 2011). Coover and Murphy (2000), in their studies posit that students - who know more about themselves, their emotions as well as about others' feelings and emotional states - have better cognitive understanding for applying interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. So, positive self descriptions can result in gaining better academic results and graduation. Emotionally intelligent people can better manage their own as well as emotions of others and hence can achieve performance levels and become outstanding performers both at academic and social levels (Mavroveli and Sánchez-Ruiz, 2010).

Allowing students to learn to know themselves and others, make responsible decisions, care for others, and understand how to act, will help to integrate emotional intelligence principles into their everyday lives even after graduation (Hirschstein, Edstrom, Frey, Snell and Mackenzie, 2007). Schools will become more caring places, students may take risks and make mistakes in the course of learning, and academic performance may improve in later grades (Di-Perna & Elliott, 2000; Wentzel, 1998). When emotional intelligence activities are intertwined with other school activities, all students in a school benefit from being taught and given opportunities to practice age-appropriate conflict resolution and confidently attempt aptitudes and/or examinations of critical reasoning successfully. Students no doubt, need empathy and coping strategies for life's difficulties so that stress do not shut down cognitive capabilities and reduce learning capabilities (Ledoux, 1994). Hence, students ability to express their personality and to enjoy rich and complex social relations depends largely on their mastery of academic matters (Nabeel and Nazir, 2003) cited in (Preeti, 2013).

Emotional Support

The importance of family support in adolescent development cannot be overemphasized. Sarafino (1998) points out in (Atoum & Al-Shoboul (2018) that emotional support is the feelings of affection, friendship, care, attention, love and confidence that others demonstrate to the individual and his sense of comfort and belonging while dealing with them. Family support could enhance the ability to meet the demands and psychological needs that students face daily. Society values friendship among students and are considered a high source of emotional support. Atoum and Almunaizel

(2011) found that Individuals who are able to understand their emotions and the emotions of others will be able to use and manage them effectively and provide the necessary support in the situations required. As students begin to expand their network of social relationships and looking for those to share experiences and school challenges (Atoum & Al-Shoboul (2018), some may start relying heavily on friends for security and examination assistance and self-development. Emotional support most likely would help to adapt to stressful situations, and successfully cope with university ups and downs, lows and highs. It enhances students' abilities to perform consistently in an academic environment and to adapt behaviour appropriately and attempting to balance up the requirements of situations and task involved.

Emotional support tries to retain focus on a course of action or need for results in the face of personal challenge or criticism. The concept of emotional support includes a wide range of behaviors such as empathy, Confront, compassionate participation, caring, encouragement toward others, love that appear in caring and attention, valued feeling, and dependable bonds of friendship (Gregory, et al., 1996; Campbell & Wright, 2002). In addition, emotional support shows care and attention that is presented

orally or non-verbally, including listening, empathy, and reassurance. It also provides an opportunity to express emotions that may reduce hardship, improve interpersonal relationships, and provide some of the goals or meanings of life experiences. The emotional characteristics of personal life of students include communication, attention, moral guidance and trust, thus providing an opportunity to vent emotions (Cohen, 2004; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Although some lecturers may overlook their role of providing a safe environment free of fear, threats and punishment Jaber, Hunt, Sabin-Farrell and Alqaysi (1995) in Atoum & Al-Shoboul (2018).

The importance of emotional support emanates from the fact that individuals who receive more emotional support or realize that emotional support is available are happier, healthier, and able to cope with the problems and troubles of life (Catrona & Russell, 1990; Pierce, Sarason & Sarason, 1990).

Receiving emotional support helps individuals to cope with problems, anxiety, and disappointments of hope and pain in their lives, but if left unchecked or treated, it would serious negative effects that could affect the physical, psychological and emotional health of students (Burlson, 1990). Having positive quality emotions and feelings help students to achieve and give their best potential in the classroom (Fazuraand Ghazali 2003). As such lecturers may need to understand any stress on students would affect their cognitive domain in classroom. Golman (1995) notes that emotional intelligence is more important to the individual's success in life than cognitive intelligence, as it plays an important role in success in work, study, and social life. Ability to adapt and cope successfully depends on integrating mental and emotional abilities, and success in personal relationships depends on the individual's awareness and ability to think about one's emotional experiences and information about them.

An emotionally intelligent student may be more well-adjusted and successful in a variety of academic and professional sectors perhaps even after leaving school. Certainly, emotional intelligence which is defined as the ability to comprehend and monitor one's own and others' feelings, allows students to facilitate the identification, recognition, and development of their emotional capabilities, to contribute to their academic achievement since happy students are no doubt, more apt to retain information and do so more effectively than dissatisfied students with loose emotions.

Academic Performance

Academic performance is the extent to which students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitude from educational activities (Suleman et al., 2019) in (Ononye, et al, 2022). Deepa and Lawrence (2013)

defined academic performance as the level of actual accomplishment or proficiency students attain in an academic area as opposed to potentials in the educational goals measured by examination. Preeti (2013) refer to it as the outcome of education-extent to which a student, teacher and institution has achieved their educational goal. This prepares students or future career and also makes them stand out competitively, be it opportunities for further education or future occupation.

Academic performance is a kind of evaluation of students in school or college in a consistent series of educational and/or academic tests. From the foregoing, key points could be adduced vis-avis emotional intelligence can enhance the perceptive powers of student's, could modify and improve the behaviour of students to attain their academic goals, could enhance students' cognitive abilities to achieving their aspirations. Performance could be coded using the standard A to F grading system, with each alphabet relating to a particular percentage performance: A \geq 75%, B =60–69%, C =50–59% , D = 45-49% and F <45%. Rode et al.(2007) predicted that emotional intelligence is related to academic performance for two reasons. First, academic performance involves a great deal of ambiguity. Second, majority of academic tasks is self-directed, requiring high levels of self-engagement. Therefore, individuals with high emotional intelligence would perform better academically (Manley,2009).

Academic activities require establishing sound relationships with peers and teachers, and emotional abilities and dispositions are thought to play a crucial role in social interaction. Emotions serve communicative and social functions, conveying information about people's thoughts and intentions, and coordinating social encounters (Keltner & Haidt, 2001; Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994; Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). The expression of positive emotions tends to elicit favorable responses from others, whereas the expression of negative emotions often drives other people away (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Furr & Funder, 1998). Emotion regulation might facilitate positive expectations for social interaction (e.g., Cunningham, 1988). This may further enhance students' motivation to engage in school activities and develop relationships with peers (Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, & Hill, 1999) as cited in Mestre, Guil, Lopes, Salovey and Paloma, (2006). Positive emotions trigger an upward spiral in emotional wellbeing and build thought-action repertoire, enhancing emotional intelligence processes' factors (Løvoll et al., 2017) in (Ononye, Ogbeta, et al, 2022).

Thus, literature has clearly shown that emotional intelligence is critical to students' learning and it has great impact on academic performance in general. Emotional intelligence may influence academic performance through the ability to cope with stressors, such as assessment, the dynamics of group collaboration, and the social and emotional demands of academic life. Emotional intelligence allows the student to fully integrate academically and socially within school environment (Rupande, 2015). Maria (2004) indicate that there is positive linear relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Students' academic performance could be enhanced with the use of emotionalcr intelligence training (Hammed, 2010). Outstanding academic performance is the key targets and goals for each student regardless of ethnic group. In order to obtain good results, apart from learning the techniques of effective and well planned, students should be able to be shown empathy and be given that emotional support due them, so that it does not become a stumbling block to success. Hence efforts to increase students' emotional intelligence should be considered during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom with the aim of building a resilient and capable human face of globalization and changing demands.

Emotional intelligence and Academic Performance Nexus

Emotional intelligence mediates positive relationship between academic performance and the mediation was deemed complementary because the direct and indirect effects are similar in effect (Ononye, Ogeta, Ndudi, Bereprefofan& Maduemezia, 2022). Students globally encounter a myriad

of stressors impacting their cognitive and emotional function, such as an uncondusive learning environment, limited support resources, poor teacher support, poor parental support, examinations, etc. The constant encounter of these stressors can cause students to experience apathy or disengagement from their studies, making them perform poorly. Emotional intelligence (EI) factors have been evidenced as critical personal resources that can stimulate students' related outcomes, like academic performance (AP), in such situations (Chew et al., 2013; Romano et al., 2021; Sarrionandia et al., 2018) in (Ononye, Ogbeta, Ndudi, Bereprebofa, Maduemezia, 2022).

How well students perform, their academic culture, study habits and their graduation rates, can either make or mar the image of a university. The nexus between emotional intelligence and academic performance seems logical seemingly because of aggregate marks on various assignments. And academic performance being a sign of dedicated attitude toward academic tasks and interactions may incite students to be more focused on their studies (Poropat, 2011). Effective management of emotions positively influences our social success (McLin, 2006) because it is not only general intelligence but also emotional intelligence (EI) that determines success in life (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2000). However, studies have shown inconclusive results for the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance (Farooq, 2000; Hassan, Sulaiman and Ishak, 2009; Ogundokun and Adeyemo, 2010; Shipley, Jackson and Segrest, 2010). Although, the reverse becomes the case with students who have full emotional support and have been shown empathy. Of course, these would have a great motivation to study and can make targeted planning towards their examinations. Students who are emotionally intelligent are perceived by their peers and colleagues as friendly and non-antagonistic (Brackett et al., 2011). This improves the relationship between peers and helps in the intellectual development which leads to superior academic performance (Berndt, 1999; Ford and Smith, 2007; Schutte et al., 2001). Hijazi and Naqvi (2006) conducted a study to find out the factors affecting college students' performance. He mainly focused on exploring the factors that associated with performance of students in intermediate examination. This study conclude that attitude towards attendance in classes, time allocation for studies, parents level of income, mother's age and mother's education were main factors that affect performance of students of private colleges. Thus, emotional intelligence is crucial in education especially because student seek to establish intimacy on the basis of emotional intelligence with lecturers both in their personal communication (Aki, 2006).

Many extant studies argue that elements of social and emotional intelligence like empathy and emotional support merge to influence the quality of academic life on campus and may determine the success or failure of university experience (Liff, 2003). The influence of emotional intelligence, has mostly been attributed to student abilities to manage the complexities of the social-emotional environment of academic environments (Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts, 2002). More specifically, emotional intelligence has been observed to directly or indirectly contribute to academic success (Afolabi et al., 2009), learn adaptive coping strategies (MacCann et al., 2011; Tugadeand Frederickson, 2008), and positive peer interactions (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, and Bakker, 2010; Petrides et al., 2008; Perera and Digiaco, 2013).

Emotional intelligence has proven a better predictor of academic success than conventional methods like the GPA, IQ, and standardized test scores (Chamundeswari, 2013). Hence, the focus on emotional intelligence on the part of universities, and other institutions nationwide. While some of it may be true and students do have some sort of emotional coping experiences based on communication gaps with their parents, teachers and peers, it is only a small part of what can be done to help them learn to become aware of their feelings and those of others, to be able to control their feelings, and treat others with empathy. One's negative moods sometime have certain ability in processing information more systematically, although at the same time, with less creativity

(Ciancy and Bierstaker, 2009). Emotional intelligence may even predict academic success in online examinations, aptitude tests, etc (Berenson, Boyles, and Weaver, 2008). No wonder emotional intelligence mediates positive relationship between academic performance and the mediation was deemed complementary because the direct and indirect effects are similar in effect (Ononye, Ogbeta, Ndudi, Bereprefofan & Maduemezia, 2022). It is majorly important for interacting and communicating with students and contributes more than verbal intelligence to speaking and writing abilities (Pishghadam, 2009).

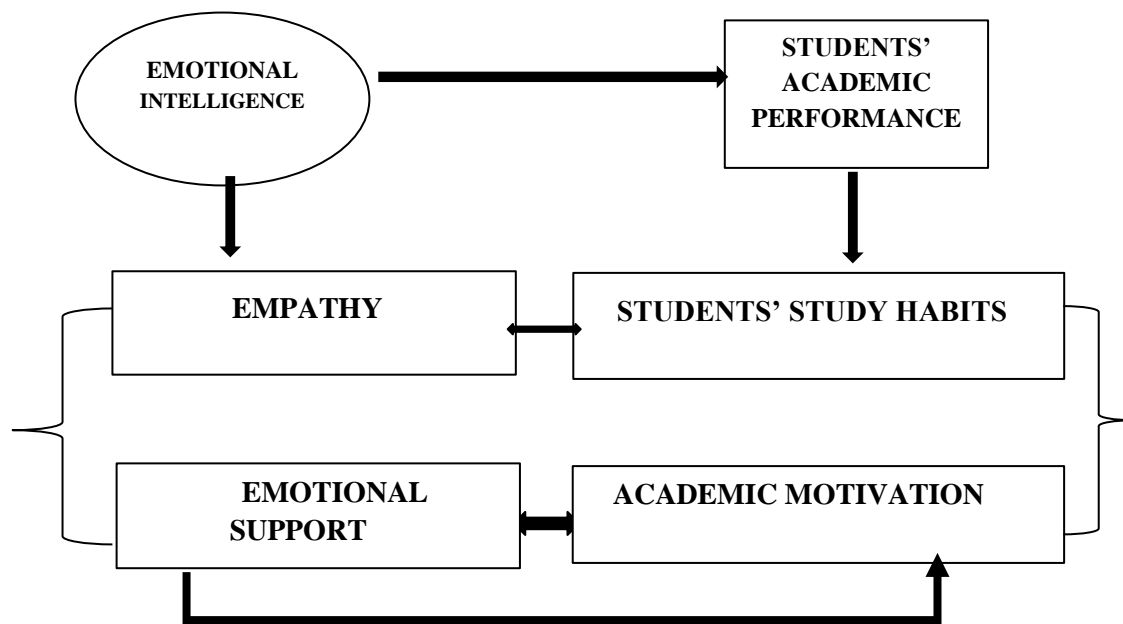


Figure 1: Conceptual Model for this study developed by the Researcher (2024)

Theoretical Review

Several models and/or theories have been developed by many scholars within the emotional-intelligence paradigm. Each theory attempts to explain the abilities, traits, and competencies associated with emotional intelligence. Some of these theories have been explained in this study. The choice of these theories was informed by the fact that several issues or challenges besetting students bothers on emotional intelligence and if addressed could help to bring about better academic performance in Nigerian universities and these can be explained within the framework of these theories.

Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Ability Model

Peter Salovey and John Mayer first coined the term "emotional intelligence" in 1990 (Brackett, Rivers, Salovey, 2011) and conceptualized Ability-Based Emotional Intelligence Model which was based on the work of Gardner and his view on personal intelligence. Their model entails five broad areas: knowing one's own emotions, managing one's own emotions, self-motivation, recognizing emotions of others (empathy) and handling relationships with others (emotional support). Emotional states distinctively encourage specific problem-solving approaches such as a happy state facilitating inductive reasoning and creative ability to excel in examinations. The third branch, emotional understanding, is the ability to understand complex emotions and the ability to identify transitions from one emotion to the other such as the transition from anger to satisfaction or from anger to shame. Lastly, the fourth branch, emotion management, is the ability to stay open to both pleasant and unpleasant feelings, the ability to reflectively connect or detach from an emotion depending

upon it being judged to be informative or utility and regulate emotions in both ourselves and in others.

Goleman's Competency Model

Daniel Goleman popularized the concept of emotional intelligence in 1995, when he wrote the landmark book *Emotional Intelligence*. He defined emotional intelligence as "abilities of being able to motivate oneself and survive in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to manage one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope. Goleman's model includes a set of emotional competencies within each, he opined that emotional competencies are not innate talents, rather learned capabilities that must be worked on and developed to achieve outstanding performance.

Goleman, believes that intelligent quotient measures only verbal fluency which is not the only indicator of success. He determined five key ingredients for emotional intelligence:

1. Self-awareness – the ability to know one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and goals and recognize their impact on others while using "gut feelings" to guide decisions.
2. Self-regulation – involves controlling or redirecting one's disruptive emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.
3. Social skill – managing relationships to move people in the desired direction.
4. Empathy - considering other people's feelings, especially when making decisions.
5. Motivation - being driven to achieve for the sake of achievement.

Figure 2: Goleman's Original Models of Emotional Intelligence.

Competencies	Definition	Hallmarks
Motivation	A passion to work for reason that goes beyond money or status. A propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence.	Strong drives to achieve. Optimism, even in the face of failure. Organizational commitment.
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people. Skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions	Expertise in building and retaining talent. Cross-cultural sensitivity. Service to client and customers
Social skill	Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks. An ability to find common ground and build rapport.	Effectiveness in leading change persuasiveness. Expertise in building and leading teams.

Source: Adapted from Goleman, D. (1998). "What Makes a Leader" *Harvard Business Review*.

System Theory

The system theory was proposed in the 1940's by the biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and furthered by Ross Ashby (1964). A system may be defined as a set of interrelated parts or units that work together towards achieving a common goal. Von Bertalanffy (1968) wrote that a system is a complex of interacting elements and that they are open to, and interact with their environments. System thinking is both part-to-whole and whole-to-part thinking about making connections between the various elements so that they fit together as a whole. The System theory reminds us of the value of integration of parts of a problem.

A feedback mechanism in form of students' results with particular emphasis on failure rate is needed for a system to be effective and efficient. The mechanism should be such that can ascertain whether

the failure rates of the students are what they should be. If not, a university system should be able to adjust its inputs in form of lecturing styles/patterns, grading pattern of lecturers, awarding of marks or other processes to improve the outputs (quality of graduates the university produces yearly). Systems rarely exist in isolation. A system is usually composed interrelated systems, called subsystems. It is important to be able to recognize these subsystems, which could be the students of these great universities because understanding this interdependence is vital to developing a complete university system. Also, understanding the interdependence between systems (or subsystems) is important because changes in form of improvement to one system may affect another in ways not envisaged or vice versa.

Systems theory sees a university as a system with many subsystems known as Faculties/Departments/Units. There is need to understand the goal/objective(s) of our Nigerian universities in order to improve the academic performance of our Nigerian students. To be effective and efficient, systems theory suggests that Nigerian universities should develop a feedback mechanism that'll monitor its output, ensuring that the output is what it should be. If not, the universities lecturers should be able to adjust its inputs in order to achieve the desired output, such that lecturers become more emotionally intelligent to improve students' academic performance.

Relevance of These Theories to the Study

Goleman's model emotional intelligence sheds more light on this when it explains that emotional intelligence is a means for personal and professional success, followed by leveraging diversity, developing others' potentials, caring and helping others (Faisa and Ghani, 2015). Students' performance is depended on the level of emotional intelligence they possess. Multiple intelligence being a theory describing the different ways students learn and acquire information range from the use of words, numbers, pictures and music, to the importance of social interactions, introspection, physical movement and being in tune with nature. As such, an understanding of the type of intelligence a student possesses, could help teachers adjust learning styles, and suggest certain career paths for learners. As a result, emotionally intelligent individuals tend to perform well and stay outstanding.

The relevance of these theories to this study is that since students' behavior is a function of inherited or acquired traits, it could be adjudged on this basis that students may be disposed to react to a given situation in certain way. This implies that emotional intelligence helps students in developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). Students who think logically about abstract propositions and test hypothesis systematically are concerned with hypothetical, anticipated and ideological challenges. These findings have provided evidence in support of theories such as Garner (1990). Lecturers' teaching with empathy and optimism to render emotional support could make a difference in the lives of their students, and they could attribute positive qualities to learners. Lecturers have the ability to identify and regulate (control) student's emotions because they interface with students who may be experiencing a wide array of emotions such as anger, frustration, depression, anxiety, and happiness. If the concept of emotional intelligence is incorporated into the university's handbook, students could master the additional learning skills required to study for a course adeptly, pass very well as they would have gained mastery of emotional intelligence.

Empirical Review

Table 1: Summary of Empirical Review

Studies on emotional intelligence are in exhaustive. Prior investigations on emotional intelligence, have been done in various disciplines and in different parts of the world including Nigeria with their

varying perspectives, different results obtained and findings. These studies have been reviewed, compiled and presented hereunder:

S/N	Author, Year & Title of The Study	Objectives of the study	Methodology	Findings	Recommendations
1	Ononye, Ogbeta, Ndudi, Bereprebofa & Maduemezia, (2022) examined Academic resilience, emotional intelligence and academic performance of undergraduate students	The study aimed to Investigate the linkages between academic resilience, emotional intelligence, and academic performance in Nigeria	The partial least square (PLS) modeling method was utilized for testing the hypotheses with data collected from 179 final year undergraduate students in the regular B.Sc. Business Administration and B.Sc. Marketing program at Delta State University, Nigeria.	The PLS results, reported that academic resilience was positively related to emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.125, p = 0.007$), academic resilience ($\beta = 0.231, p = 0.000$) and emotional intelligence ($\beta = 0.260, p = 0.000$) were positively related to academic performance, and emotional resilience mediated the positive relationship between academic resilience and academic performance ($\beta = 0.057, p = 0.005$). While academic resilience predicted academic performance, it also predicted emotional intelligence, which affected academic performance significantly and positively.	The study recommended that educational organizations, as epicenters of knowledge, should introduce training programs focusing on academic resilience and emotional intelligence into the university curriculum and be treated as an up-skilling program for students. educational organizations and students should take issues concerning academic resilience and emotional intelligence seriously as they are strongly predictive of not just academic performance but other personal endeavors outside an

					academic setting.
2	Amalu, Melvina (2018), emotional intelligence as a predictor of academic performance among secondary school students in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria.	To find out if there is positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. To examine emotional intelligence components (self-awareness managing emotion, motivating oneself, empathy and social skills) and their significant impact on academic performance.	Descriptive survey design was used. Descriptive statistics and Multiple Regression Analysis were used for data analysis.	Result found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. It also showed that emotional intelligence components had significant impact on academic performance.	It was recommended that emotional quotient be incorporated into existing educational programme in order to promote students' performance and attain success for the future.
3	Preeti (2013) Role of Emotional Intelligence for Academic Achievement for Students in Boston College for Professional Studies, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India.	To understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement, ii. To understand the role of teachers, parents and education curriculum for developing emotional competencies in students, iii. To explore the factors from secondary data which can affect the academic achievement and development of emotional Intelligence.	Secondary data were collected	Emotional Intelligence is not, in itself, sufficient to create optimal outcomes for youth. However, study reveals that factors such Emotional Literacy, Academic understanding, Affective Domain Building, Self Assessment, Pressure Handling, Parental Guidance, Performance Evaluation, Academic Motivation, if emphasized may help the mentors, parents and academics to motivate the students for the understanding of emotions in their lives. As we are educating both the academic aspect and affective (emotional) aspects of the students	
4	Adil, Amjad and Malik (2012) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' academic performance in Pakistan and Afghanistan	To investigate the relationship between students' emotional intelligence and their academic performance at university level. To find out any difference in emotional intelligence scores across nationality and gender of the students. To explore new ways to deal with challenges at social, professional and academic levels.	Pearson correlation and t-test were used to analyze the gathered data.	The study concludes that students' emotional intelligence is not significantly associated with their academic performance measured through self reported CGPA. The results could not link emotional intelligence with students' academic performance, while a positive relationship was found between emotional intelligence and age of students. Also, the results could not find any difference in students' emotional intelligence across nationality and gender. However, the study establishes a positive association	

					($r = .15$) of emotional intelligence with the age of the students.
5	Drago (2004) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement in non-traditional college students in Minnesota state, United states of America	To understand better the contribution of emotional intelligence towards academic achievement. To investigate if emotional intelligence enhance cognitive abilities of students	Bivariate and multivariate correlation and regression	Results demonstrated a significant correlation between emotional intelligence, students' GPA and cognitive ability	Non-cognitive factors such as emotional intelligence may supplement or enhance student cognitive ability and as such, should be advocated.
6	Mestre and others (2006) investigated emotional intelligence and social and academic adaptation to school in Spain	To investigate the ability to understand and manage emotions, assessed by a performance measure of emotional intelligence T-test analysis and Pearson correlation analysis	Descriptive statistics and correlation were used. Study Participants were rated on three 10-point scales, the study also collected self-report data using an exploratory scale and the	Mean score of emotional intelligence within female students appeared to be higher than male students. Emotional abilities of female students correlated positively with peer friendship nominations. The results showed that the ability to understand and manage emotions remained significantly associated with teacher ratings of academic adaptation among boys and peer friendship nominations among girls.	
7	Yahaya, Bon and Ismai, (2011) investigated the relationship between dimensions of emotional intelligence and academic performance in secondary school students, in Malaysia.	To investigate the relationship between the identified five dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, interpersonal skills and academic performance.	Statistical inference of the Pearson-r and multiple regression was used to analyze the data.	The results showed that the significant relationship between self-awareness ($r = 0.21$), emotional management ($r = 0.21$) and empathy ($r = 0.21$) at the level of $p < 0.05$ with academic performance. Findings from multiple regression analysis (stepwise) showed that only three dimensions of emotional intelligence which is self-awareness ($\beta = 0.261$), self motivation ($\beta = -0.182$) and empathy ($\beta = 0.167$) accounted for 8.7% of variation in criterion (academic performance).	
8	Filiz and Arikan (2012) investigated students' empathy levels and their achievement in	To find the correlation between students' empathy levels and their achievement in foreign language learning. The study tried to answer if there was a	Pearson's correlation test was used	Results suggests that no significant correlation was found between achievement in English language learning and their empathy levels	

	foreign language learning, in Gaziatep, Turkey.	correlation between university level preparatory school empathy levels and their achievement in foreign language learning			
9]	Aremu, Tella and Tella (2013) investigated the relationship among emotional intelligence, parental involvement and academic achievement of 500 Senior Secondary School Students in Ibadan, Nigeria.	To investigate the relationship among emotional intelligence, parental involvement and academic achievement of students in secondary schools.	Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and Multiple Regression Statistics.	There is a positive and significant relationship among emotional intelligence, parental involvement and academic achievement of study participants. Parental involvement predicts academic achievement	Parents could have to note that their interpersonal relationships and direct interest in the academics of their students could bring a better academic performance. Thus, effort should be made by them to be positively disposed to students' academics. Two, both home and school need to cooperate in making the students to be well adjusted emotionally as this could make or mar academic achievement. The study therefore, recommends that counselling psychologists and school's counsellors should work on the emotional well-being of students within the school environment.
10	Adegboyega (2019) did a study on the Influence of Moderating Variables on Nigerian Undergraduates' Emotional Intelligence and Attitude towards Examination, in Ilorin, Nigeria.	The present study sought to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and Nigerian undergraduates' attitude towards examination. The moderating variables of gender, age, level of study, university and family type was also part of the investigation.	Descriptive survey of the correlational type was employed for the study. One thousand, five hundred and thirty-six (1,536) undergraduates in Nigeria were drawn using purposive and stratified sampling techniques.	The findings revealed that there was a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and attitude of Nigerian undergraduates towards examination. The findings also revealed that gender, age, level of study, university and family type had a significant positive influence on undergraduates' emotional intelligence and attitude towards	It was therefore recommended, among others, that students should continue to cultivate the habit of developing high emotional intelligence as it would help them to develop positive attitude towards examination, effective leadership skills such as improved communication among peers and other people, less school and

				examination in Nigeria.	workplace conflict, better problem-solving skills.
11	Atoum & Al-Shoboul, (2018) examined Emotional support and its relationship to Emotional intelligence.	This study aimed at revealing the emotional support from family, teacher, friends, and social medial network among a sample of (732) ninth graders Jordanian students, and to investigate the relationship between emotional support and emotional intelligence.	The study used emotional support scale developed by Hasada, Senda, & Minoguchi (1989, consisting of (16) items using 5 point liker-type responses. Items were divided among four dimension sources (family, friends, teacher, social networks). The scale was translated from English to Arabic and translated back from Arabic to English to check for possible translation errors.	The results showed that there were positive correlations between each of the sources of emotional support (family, friends and teacher) and emotional intelligence and its dimensions, and between the emotional support from networks and management of emotions of others. Also, the results showed the contribution of family, friends and network emotional support in predicting emotional intelligence with a clear contribution to family in accounting for the variation in emotional intelligence.	

Knowledge Gap

There are several studies on the subject matter but a careful evaluation revealed some gaps. Apart from very few studies done in Nigeria, there is a dearth of empirical work that focused on tertiary institutions in African countries hence the need for revalidation of existing works within the Nigerian context. There is paucity of literature on the role of emotional intelligence on academic performance of students in public universities in the southern Nigeria. Very limited studies on students were conducted in universities. These studies may have dwelt on similar topics but may not have talked to the same environment, used different emotional intelligence constructs and may be limited to individual states or countries, thus establishing another yawning gap in extant literature.

While there is a plethora of studies and empirical data on the concept of emotional intelligence and its relationship with the academic related concepts, research on the same concept is quite limited in southern Nigeria as its relationship with learning environment and/or performance hasn't been researched enough in Nigerian universities. The organization of interest in empirical review is mostly secondary schools and medical students, leaving generalization of findings as an open issue for tertiary institutions.

Similarly, a noticeable trend was the presence of literature gap in the form of variance in constructs/operational variables used for each of these studies, methodological, geographical and analytical gaps - using different research methods (some qualitative, interview and observation and others both quantitative and qualitative).

Apparently, there appears to be no comprehensive study on emotional intelligence and students' academic performance in state owned universities in southern Nigeria. As a matter of fact, very negligible number of empirical investigations was done in these studies. None seemed to have been

conducted in tertiary institutions in Southern Nigeria particularly, thus establishing a lacuna. In order to fill in this informational vacuum, this study was therefore necessitated to bridge this gap. Due to the mixed nature of literature on research findings on the subject matter, there is need to further explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance in state universities in Southern Nigeria.

These gaps led to the initial drive for this study which is to ascertain whether the constructs used in extant studies can be applied in tertiary institutions in the Nigerian context. This study thus intends to bridge these yawning gaps in knowledge by attempting a more holistic examination of the strength of relationship between emotional intelligence and students' academic performance targeting empathy and emotional support as study variables and incorporating state universities with evidence from Southern Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODS

A correlational survey research design was employed in this study since it provides causal and meaningful explanations. It also helps to determine the strength of relationship between emotional intelligence variables and academic performance of students. Also, a descriptive research design was used in this study. This study adopted the simple random and the stratified sampling technique in which every sample conveniently had an equal chance to be selected as participants. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the extent of the correlation between emotional intelligence and students' academic performance. T – test value was used to further determine if the relationships are significant. All the tests of the hypotheses was at 0.05 level of significance. All valid responses from the formulated hypotheses were assessed using the multiple regression analysis through statistical package for social science (SPSS version 23.0).

Population of the Study

The target population for the study was all the first- and final-year undergraduate students. The choice of these universities was further informed by the fact that in their written exams, the skills required are mainly cognitive and affective. First-year students were chosen as participants for this study because of their transition period from home to independent/self-sufficient living in the tertiary institution, experiencing high-stress levels. Clearly, these are demanding academic years. Final-year undergraduate students are facing their final year graduation examination with a view to being awarded the Bachelor of Science Degree and this period is considered another high-stress (demanding) time for this group of students particularly the studious ones amongst them. The first- and final-year students are considered to be in more emotionally demanding academic years and thus the effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance would be more apparent. It is difficult to study the entire population in most cases or totally impossible in some (Onodugo, Ugwuonah and Ebinne, 2010:69), hence the study targeted sampling frame of 383.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

H₁: Empathy has significant statistical relationship with students' study habits

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	47.943	1.883		25.460	.000

Empathy and study habits	.075	.088	.038	.855	.393
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a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.038a	.001	-.001	4.1651

a. Predictors: (Constant), Empathy and Study Habits

As can be gleaned from tables above, holding other factors constant, 3.8% improvement in academic performance, is accounted for, by empathy (Adj. r^2 value = $-.001$). The Beta value of $.038$ indicates that empathy can contribute 3.8% to academic performance. The p-value >0.05 in table above ($.393$) suggesting that there is no positive and significant relationship between empathy and academic performance. Since the p-value is greater than the critical level of significance $p < 0.05$, the alternate hypothesis was rejected and null accepted that empathy has no statistical and significant relationship with academic performance of students in Nigerian universities. The p-value in table above suggests that the relationship between empathy and academic performance is highly insignificant. Therefore, hypothesis three is largely unsupported.

Table 2: Regression analysis for Empathy and study habits

H₂: Emotional support has significant relationship with academic motivation in Nigerian universities?

Table 4: Regression analysis for Emotional support and academic motivation in Nigerian universities?

Coefficients^a

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	18.569	1.041		17.842	.000
	Emotional Support	.115	.049	.120	2.360	.019

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.120a	.014	.012	2.4163

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Support

Table 6: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.517	1	32.517	5.569	.019b

Residual	2224.460	381	5.838	
Total	2256.977	382		

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Support

From tables above, it was observed that 12% improvement in academic performance is explained by emotional support (Adj. r^2 value = .012). The Beta value of 12% indicates that emotional support contributes 12% to academic performance. Since the p-value of .019 is less than the critical level of significance $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted.

Discussion/Management Implications

The results obtained shoring on the nature of relationship between emotional support and academic motivation, indicates a significant but weak relationship with academic performance. This study demonstrated statistically significant and positive relationship between emotional support and academic motivation. Corresponding with the idea of Atoum & Al-Shoboul (2018) in relation to understanding examined Emotional support and its relationship to Emotional intelligence viz-avis finding out if emotional support from friends, teachers, family and social media network would enhance academic performance. The results showed that there were positive correlations between each of the sources of emotional support (family, friends and teacher) and emotional intelligence and its dimensions between emotional support from networks and management of emotions of others.

The second proposition which hinges on exploring the nature of relationship between empathy and academic performance. Surprisingly, the result(s) was found to have a weak and negative relationship with academic performance. These results indicate that there is no positive and significant relationship between empathy and academic performance. However, some researchers have shown that the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance is uncertain given that empirical research has shown a weak relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance, and the results vary dramatically depending on the operationalization of the academic performance variable (Eagan 2007). Spencer and Spencer, (1993) and Steele (1997) asserted that the ability to read others' needs comes naturally and reading people accurately and avoiding stereotyping can lead to performance deficits by creating anxiety in the stereotyped students. This is arguably in sharp contrast with the position of Esiobu (2011) who averred that the use of cooperative learning as an intervention strategy could make students understand each other, learn conflict resolution skills, team spirit, and tolerance.

Results Summary

The highpoints of this study have been well emphasized. Although, there is paucity of data related to the nature of relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance amongst students in Nigerian universities. Findings have thus been summed up and highlighted hereunder:

1. Also, it was discovered that empathy has weak and statistically negative significance in relation to students' academic performance (Adj. r^2 value = -.001, Beta = .038, p-value > 0.05 in table 2 (.393). It means that empathy is not a strong predictor of academic performance and may not positively contribute significantly to academic performance. The Beta value of indicates that empathy could contribute 3.8% to academic performance. This indicates that little improvement in academic performance is explained by empathy.
2. That there is a significant and positive difference between emotional support and academic motivation. It is clear from tables 4, 5, and 6 that significant differences between emotional support and academic motivation were observed. (Adj. R^2 = .012 or 12%, Beta = 12%, p

< .019). Thus, the Beta value of 12%, is explained by the positive and significant contribution of 12% improvement to academic performance. Although, the results remain inconclusive in terms of their consistency with extant literature and more research is needed to understand the exact nature of relationship with academic performance with particular reference to other indices of academic performance which this study could not address.

CONCLUSION

The importance of emotional intelligence in Nigerian universities has been well emphasized and the highpoints highlighted in the course of this study. As such, the study was able to achieve its broad objective which was to determine the strength of relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance of selected Nigerian universities. The results of the study showed that the study variables of emotional intelligence and academic performance are significantly related to each other and intertwined. Therefore, on the basis of the results obtained, this study concludes that emotional intelligence of students is positively attuned with students' academic performance though the strength of the relationship between the study variables and emotional intelligence seems to be a weak one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of findings and conclusion, it can be inferred that emotional intelligence is a prerequisite for the correction of the grave learning imperfections in the university system with a particular reference to academic performance. Higher emotional intelligence may lead management students to pursue their interests more dynamically and think more expansively about subjects of interest thus reducing cognitive misunderstandings, which could be an explanatory factor for higher academic performance. Premised upon findings, the study wishes to recommend the following:

1. Since emotional intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, empathy should be the mantra for all lecturers and students.
2. Emotional support systems for students should be improved upon for attainment of higher cumulative grade points average as this leaves a long term. A good academic ambience would foster relationship among university management and students and would bring about emotional support and balance between lecturers and students to enhance their academic motivations. And students who may have been supported emotionally no doubt may likely excel in their exams.
3. It is also suggested to Nigerian universities that focus should be on aspects of emotional factors like support from friends, lecturers, social networks, family and others to develop highly emotionally intelligent students so as to correct the grave imperfections in the university system that will enable students thrive academically.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has been able to bridge the study gap between emotional intelligence and academic performance of students in Nigerian universities as a large number of studies reviewed, dwelt on leaders' emotional intelligence and subordinates' work attitudes but this study veered off slightly and shifted its paradigm to academic performance of students which thus represents a contribution to knowledge. This represents something novel in Management sciences given the interactions between study variables and research findings. This study also contributes to knowledge by closing the gap spotted in literature about the dearth of studies that specifically focused on emotional intelligence and academic performance with particular reference to empathy and emotional support. It has highlighted some highpoints that would make students to be more empathetic particularly in studying together as a group and carrying out some specific academic tasks or doing assignments together as a group where the sound minds or highly intellectual students can coach other students

who are really not sound in a particular course like business statistics and business mathematics. This could sharpen or re-awake other students' cognition and make them better academically.

Lastly, people react differently emotionally, to different situations. Some students who have performed badly academically, could just go into depression, abscond from school leaving their parents to believe they are still students whereas they are not or even worse case scenario, attempt suicide. Thus, instead of dampening the zeal of these ones who may have suffered harsh treatment or lack of emotional support within the school environment or from their parents/guardians, empathy, emotional support and awareness of their weaknesses or depressed state, could make the emotionally intelligent students or lecturers or non-teaching staff, help to resuscitate these ones emotionally and calmly reassure them to help bring out the strength in these students so they can gain emotional stability which would make them pick up strength and ensure destructive emotions do not cripple their success or get in their way academically.

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