



## Emotional intelligence and principals' effectiveness: A study of selected secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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<https://doi.org/10.57040/wajesp.v2i2.572>

Received: October 18, 2023 | Accepted: December 11, 2023 | Published: December 29, 2023

### ABSTRACT

This study evaluated how emotional intelligence affects the overall effectiveness of principals in Rivers State's schools. To achieve its goal, it sought to determine the levels of emotional intelligence possessed by these principals, and how such emotional intelligence capacity related to their job performance. The population of the study was 92 principals selected from secondary schools across Rivers State; this figure also served as the sample size. Using a quantitative survey questionnaire, data were collected from the participants across various components of emotional intelligence - including Self-Awareness; Self-Regulation; Self-Motivation; Empathy; and Social Skills. The findings supported a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and principals' performance - with self-awareness and social skills having made a significant contribution to this correlation. Conversely, it was found that self-motivation had the weakest impact on principals' effectiveness among all five components examined. Based on analysis, implementing robust training programmes for principals while prioritising recruitment based on candidates' emotional intelligence capacity and fostering a nurturing school culture were recommended.

**Keywords:** Components, Effectiveness, Emotional Intelligence, Principal, Secondary school

### 1. INTRODUCTION

"Emotional intelligence" is derived from the words "emotion" and "intelligence." The word emotion "stems from the Latin word "emovere" which means to move out or agitate" (von Scheve, 2019). Emotion includes feelings, behaviours, physiological changes, and thoughts. Its main purpose is to tell the person about how they interact with the outside world. Though they cannot produce emotional sensations, perceptual, evaluative, conceptual, and non-cognitive processes can trigger and impact emotional feelings (Izard, 1993). According to Hockenbury and Hockenbury (2007), an emotion is a complex psychological state that involves three distinct components: subjective experience, physiological response, and behavioral or expressive response.

Schools require effective leaders who possess strong leadership skills to excel in providing quality educational services and leadership towards student development. Effective school leadership requires the exhibition of sound social and emotional understanding of students' wellbeing and emotions. Recent studies conducted in Canada, the United States and Britain, have shown that training on emotional competence is linked with a remarkable impact on conflict resolution. Conflict resolution herein refers to establishment of reciprocal relationships between team members and motivation. Effective School Management necessitates emotionally intelligent leaders to achieve the goals they set. Kaur (2013) noted that emotional intelligence is associated with successful leadership styles and communication skills.

The principal is recognised as the one in charge of the daily running of the secondary school and its environment. As the head of the school, he/she carries out administration functions (Ijaiya, 2004). Also, principals execute governmental policies on education in accordance with specified objectives. Accordingly, they are expected to possess leadership skills with a clear vision of what must be accomplished based on their abilities and understanding of the institution and what ought to be done to enhance the education system for teaching and learning in society. Guanah, Okoro and Okonkwo (2022) cite the National Education Association that principals have been trained to develop and implement effective mechanisms of support for teachers and teacher leaders

The principal as an Administrator has a unique opportunity to lead several groups including communities. He/she is therefore meant to use leadership skills in creating connections with people in the community to serve as school volunteers and in upholding student discipline. This requires emotional intelligence on the part of the principal. In other words, the way and manner the principal will go about his/her duties demands emotional intelligence. Principals who lack emotional

intelligence find it challenging to understand the emotions of their staff and students, thereby making it difficult for them to support their learning, success, and motivation to achieve goals. This implies that a principal's emotional intelligence could have an impact on how well he or she can understand and engage his/her staff, students, and their environment as well as perform other administrative tasks.

Obviously, emotional intelligence is one of the key rudiments of effective school management, and a principal who wishes to excel in his/her administrative duties must be able to effectively control his/her emotions. Emotional intelligence, according to Goleman (1995) as cited in Obiekwe and Ogbo (2020), is associated with improved career performance and success and has the potential to produce more positive attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes. A study by Okorie and Nwachukwu (2019) conducted in Abia State found a significant link between secondary school principal's achievement in the State, Nigeria, and emotional intelligence. Therefore, this present study sought to find out if emotional intelligence is significantly related to the effectiveness of principals of secondary schools in Rivers State; ascertain which of the five components of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills have the strongest effect on the principals, and determine which of the five components of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills have the lowest effect on the principals. These variables of interest constitute and justify the topic of this study.

### 1.1. Statement of the problem

Possessing strong emotional intelligence is critical for effective school leadership in today's educational landscape. Unfortunately, there exists limited research about how these abilities might impact principals' effectiveness within schools located throughout Rivers State, Nigeria. Learning more about how principals use their own leadership skills towards improving outcomes in schools across the state is paramount because of the need to improve the quality of education in their own regions. The majority of secondary school principals in Nigeria, especially those in Rivers State, appear to lack the capacity for sound judgment, self-control, self-motivation, interpersonal interaction, and communication. Poor decision leads to conflicts, poor administrative performance, indiscipline, discrepancies, disagreements as well as lack of cooperation. As there are instances of teachers being unable to use the proper methods to deliver lessons, manage the classroom during lessons, maintain discipline, and provide detailed feedback on students' performance and achievement, there are concerns regarding the instructional supervision and communication skills of principals.

A breakdown in communication that appears to have an influence on principals' performance is caused by the fact that the majority of principals lack the communication skills necessary for the efficient coordination and integration of the many components of the educational system. The emotional intelligence of principals may be related to these administrative issues. To address these concerns and gaps within our current knowledge bank regarding educational leadership practices across Nigeria generally, and specifically at the Rivers state level, our study seeks to investigate potential relationships between emotional intelligence and principal effectiveness. The objectives of the study were to: find out if emotional intelligence is significantly related to the effectiveness of principals' of secondary schools in Rivers State; ascertain which of the five components of self-awareness, self-regulation, self motivation, empathy, and social skills have the strongest effect on the principals, and to determine which of the five components of self-awareness, self-regulation, self motivation, empathy, and social skills have the lowest effect on the principals.

### 1.2. Theoretical framework

The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) theory served as this study's theoretical framework. The theory is a multifaceted field with contributions from numerous researchers and theorists over many years (SEL, 2022). Ongoing research and practice continue to inform the development and implementation of SEL programmes that benefit individuals of all ages in diverse settings. Hence its source cannot be attributed to a single scholar. The theory can be said to have undergone some processes, thus:

**Early Foundations (Pre-1960s): Sigmund Freud (late 19th/early 20th century):** Pioneered psychoanalysis, laying the groundwork for understanding emotions and their role in personality and behaviour. Alfred Adler (early 20th century): Developed individual psychology, emphasising social and emotional factors in human motivation and well-being. Carl Jung (early 20th century) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence, paving the way for future research on emotional awareness and regulation.

**Mid-20th Century Developments: Abraham Maslow (1943):** Maslow's hierarchy of needs highlighted the importance of emotional well-being as a foundation for self-actualization; B.F. Skinner (1953): Operant conditioning theory provided insights into how emotions and social interactions influence learning and behaviour.

**Formalisation of SEL as a Field (1960s-Present): Daniel Goleman (1995):** Popularised the concept of emotional intelligence, sparking interest in social and emotional skills development; Carolyn Saarni (1979-present): Contributed significantly to the understanding of emotional development in children and adolescents. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (1994-present): Led the way in defining and promoting SEL frameworks and practices in schools and communities (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning-CASEL, 2023). The widely accepted core principles within the field of Social Emotional Learning theory are:

### 1. Five Core Competencies:

CASEL, a leading organization in SEL, identifies five core competencies that form the foundation of SEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2023):

- **Self-awareness:** Understanding one's own emotions, thoughts, values, and motivations.
- **Self-management:** Effectively managing emotions, behaviours, and stress.
- **Social awareness:** Recognizing and understanding emotions and perspectives of others.
- **Relationship skills:** Building healthy and positive relationships with others.
- **Responsible decision-making:** Making ethical and constructive choices based on consideration of personal values, social norms, and potential consequences.

### 2. Developmental Approach:

SEL recognises that social and emotional skills develop gradually throughout life, requiring ongoing learning and support. Interventions and strategies are tailored to specific age groups and developmental stages.

### 3. Holistic Integration:

SEL is not separate from academic learning but rather seen as fundamental for academic success. It provides the basis for attention, motivation, engagement, and self-regulation needed for effective learning.

### 4. Evidence-Based Practices:

Effective SEL programmes are grounded in research and implement evidence-based practices with proven effectiveness in developing social and emotional skills.

### 5. Collaborative & Supportive Environments:

Schools, families, and communities all play a role in fostering SEL. Creating safe, supportive, and inclusive environments is crucial for promoting social and emotional well-being (Pekrun, 2020; Zins, Greenberg & Elias, 2006).

The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) theory prioritises nurturing the development of essential emotional intelligence competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness relationship management alongside responsible decision-making amongst both educators and learners to improve their academic success rate while enhancing their personal growth (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011).

Numerous types of research have demonstrated the link between applying SEL and the promotion of academic excellence and good behaviour as well as socio-emotional well-being among students (Durlak et al., 2011; Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone & Shriver, 2003). Additionally, instructors who exhibit high emotional intelligence skills are more effective in fostering positive learning environments while managing conflicts (Brackett, Rivers & Salovey, 2010).

Proponents of incorporating SEL interventions in schools point out the importance they place on cultivating essential soft skills such as emotional intelligence. Embracing this approach means nurturing an individual's ability to perceive their own emotions accurately so as not to lose control when under duress while keeping an eye on how their conduct impacts others within their environment sensitively (Durlak et al., 2011). Given that relationships are core components within any learning community setting, other skills taught under this theory include:

- i. Self-awareness promotes individuals' capacity for introspection while developing a broad view outside themselves about how they fit within any given social group they find themselves.
- ii. Self-regulation enables individuals to be more grounded in the face of emotional turmoil mounting up within themselves thereby keeping them composed and less likely to act irrationally.
- iii. Social awareness builds empathy through the development of an accurate perception of how others feel in response to any given situation.
- iv. Relationship management emphasises the need for clear communication and conflict resolution techniques, which are all essential qualities for building strong social bonds.
- v. Responsible decision-making denotes a value system based on sound ethical principles that students can carry with them throughout their lives.

Research has shown that SEL interventions in schools can lead to improved academic achievement, behaviour, and socio-emotional well-being among students (Durlak et al., 2011). For instance, a meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs indicated that participating children improved their academic achievement by 11 percentile points over non-participating students (Durlak et al., 2011). This theory is pertinent to this study because it highlights the significance of fostering emotional intelligence competencies in students and links it to improved academic performance, behaviour, and socio-emotional well-being. It provides a template that allows for the determination of how the EI of Principals in secondary schools in Rivers State affects how they discharge their duties.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW - AN OVERVIEW OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The term emotional intelligence refers to individual differences in perceptions, processing, management and utilization of emotional information. According to Tyagi and Gautam (2017), emotional intelligence is the capacity of any individual to comprehend his or her own emotions and to distinguish between various sentiments. Another way to put it is as managing and regulating emotions in order to achieve desired goals. Strong emotional intelligence enables a person to

notice how emotions impair their bodies, relationships, thinking, and capacity for goal achievement. The alternate definition offered by Salovey and Mayer (1990: 185) is "the capacity to monitor one's own another's feelings and emotions, to distinguish between them, and to use this information to inform one's thinking and actions". Emotional intelligence reveals the ability to recognise emotions and, reactions, understand what others are saying and realising how one's emotions affect people. It also involves an individual's perception of other's emotions. Hence, emotional intelligence can be said to be a suitable predictor variable in different areas like job satisfaction, life satisfaction, family-life satisfaction, and so on. However, the purpose of this study is to examine the connection between secondary school principals' job efficacy and emotional intelligence.

Principals are the foundation of the educational system, particularly at the second tier of the educational pyramid where they are the primary actors in the promotion of schools' effectiveness. The role of the principal is far more complex and sophisticated today than it was a long time ago. The enormous tasks that principals are expected to complete each day indicate how complex their duties are. How well they execute their leadership responsibilities will determine how the standard of education will be maintained. According to Avery (2004), some leadership emergence or behaviours that seem effective in one specific environment may be viewed as ineffectual in another. Effectiveness is said to be the basis for success, while efficiency is a requirement for at least surviving once success has been attained. Effectiveness is doing the right thing, but efficiency is about doing things correctly.

Effectiveness involves bringing about or accomplishing. Therefore for an activity, an institution, or a person deemed to be effective, some sort of accomplishment must have taken place. An organisation may be termed effective if it accomplishes specific goals. The outcome of administrative actions and initiatives conducted with the intention of accomplishing predefined goals is administrative effectiveness. Task delegation, leading by example, and administrative decision-making performance are a few of these. Supporting this definition is McCrimmon's (2007) results which revealed that effective administration entails efficiency, getting things done with the least cost. Organisations that practice administrative effectiveness generally adhere to certain principles; it is not just important to produce results; it is also important to do so efficiently, which means paying the least amount of money possible to do so.

Due to the fact that they serve as a link between the various organisational components and facilitate outstanding communication and information flow between them, effective administrators are a tremendous asset to any business or institution. According to Jenkins (2010), school administrators have difficult and demanding jobs. They must be familiar with and knowledgeable about their communities and schools, exercise leadership to ensure that students receive a quality education, and constantly advance their professional knowledge. A good school administrator must have knowledge of how students learn, and the leadership and management actions necessary to support students' learning.

In secondary school organisation, the principal is the chief executive who gives the necessary leadership functions for the achievement of school goals. He is the leader and is responsible for all the happenings in the school. The principal is expected to perform several administrative roles in order to achieve the goals of secondary education. These roles are summed up into five areas, according to Ogbonnaya (as cited in Mgbodile, 2004), they are development and implementation of educational programmes, Development of teaching staff, Student relation function, Community relation function, and financial function. Similarly, Ocho and Okeke (as cited in Obiekwe & Ogbo, 2020) had categorised these functions into five namely: management of instructional programme, staff personnel administration, student personnel administration, financial and physical resource management.

Several studies have found that emotional intelligence is related to various aspects of principals' effectiveness. Caruso and Salovey (2003) and Kellett, Humphrey and Sleeth (2006) discovered that emotional intelligence levels have a major impact on a leader's performance. They also discovered that principals with high emotional intelligence tend to perform better than those with low emotional intelligence. Pashiardis (2006), Brauckmann (2009) and Fleishman (2004) also found a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership. Fleishman (2004) conducted a study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and instructional leadership of primary school teachers and also found a significant relationship. Finally, Ekeh (2011), Mills and Rouse (2009), Moore (2009) and Sala (2003) also found that high emotional intelligence is positively related with effective leadership. Ideapod (2023) asserts that people with high emotional intelligence often show character traits like Self-awareness, Authenticity, Self-regulation, Effective Communication, Empathy, Self-motivation, Assertiveness, Open-mindedness, Curiosity, Flexibility, Optimism, and Resilience

### **2.1. Emotional intelligence and the school system**

A critical component for leading effectively within schools is emotional intelligence (EI). This skill set involves managing one's emotions alongside those around us (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Education leaders like school principals notably benefit from high EI levels because they help foster constructive relationships amidst conflicts while inspiring other faculty members (Brackett & Katulak, 2006; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). Myriads of studies exists that have shown correlations between elevated EI levels amongst educational leaders with increased effectiveness, for instance, Bradberry and Greaves' (2009) findings in the United States support the fact that there is increased EI in educational

leaders and improved effectiveness. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Cooper, Sawaf, and Islam (2018) found that head teachers with higher levels of EI had a positive impact on staff well-being, which in turn led to higher student achievement. Evidence revealed that investigation into the relationship between emotional intelligence and principal effectiveness in Nigeria has been minimal, however, current research suggests that it plays a critical role in successful school leadership. For instance, secondary school principals in Abia State were found to have significantly better leadership outcomes because they possess strong emotional intelligence abilities (Okorie & Nwachukwu, 2019), while Adewale and Mabekoje's (2017) study revealed similar results for those operating schools within Ogun State.

While the focus of this study remains limited to southern Nigeria's region of Rivers State; broader investigations into educational practice highlight valuable qualities necessary for effective leading amongst Nigerian schools, like communication skills, as highlighted by Olabisi (2018). Also, Aliyu (2017) identified key traits such as change management expertise. The impact of emotional intelligence on Nigerian workplace success has been studied with findings revealing its significance for higher education administrators' job performance (Okechukwu, Eze & Eze, 2015) as well as teachers' job satisfaction (Owoyemi & Adeniji, 2013). Limited research exists on the role of principals' emotions when managing schools within Rivers State, the State has a large population size and numerous schools, combined with unique cultural and contextual factors, and these have the potential to influence how emotional intelligence affects principals' effectiveness. Therefore a deeper understanding of this relationship could be instrumental to improving school leadership, and the quality of education provided in Rivers State.

## 2.2. Concept of emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is significant when it comes to human beings. It relates to an individual's capacity for acknowledging their own emotions alongside other people's feelings while using such information in guiding behaviour (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). According to Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002), EI is a crucial trait for effective leadership. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can motivate those under their control to take action. They can create strong relationships with them while managing complex interpersonal dynamics. Emotional intelligence was first coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990). It simply means "the ability to perceive emotion, and integrate emotion into thought processes; understand emotions beyond language description; regulate one's own emotions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990: 189). Over time, different researchers have confirmed its influence on diverse fields including education (Brackett & Katulak, 2006), leadership (Goleman et al. 2002), and work performance (Okechukwu et al., 2015).

It is widely recognized that emotional intelligence can significantly affect different outcomes like job satisfaction (Owoyemi & Adeniji, 2013), leadership success (Adewale & Mabekoje, 2017; Okorie & Nwachukwu, 2019) and academic achievements (Brackett & Katulak, 2006). Emotional intelligence is very important within educational settings for both teachers and administrators. It has been found to aid in fostering cordial relationships between educators' colleagues', students, as well as parents while aiding effective classroom management strategies (Cooper, Sawaf & Islam, 2018).

## Roles of Principals in Secondary Schools

Principals play various roles in secondary schools while seeking to provide high-quality education to their students. The position requires complex responsibilities such as leading the school community and managing resources effectively, while also ensuring student excellence (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006). Instructional leadership is a key responsibility for this role as it involves setting the vision for student achievement through appropriate curriculum development and employing effective teaching practices (Hallinger & Heck 1996). Attesting to its importance, the research by Leithwood et al. (2006) found a positive correlation between effective instructional leadership and student achievement. Apart from instructional responsibilities, other vital tasks include ensuring smooth running of daily activities through budgeting or staffing issues while fostering positive relationships between all parties involved in education (Leithwood et al., 2006; Fullan, 1991).

Collaborating with parents and other stakeholders is a vital component of any secondary school Principal's role. Achieving this outcome effectively requires forming partnerships with local businesses or communities- engaging in fundraising activities can also be beneficial to schools looking to expand their programmes (Fullan 1991). As Guanah, Eleke and Okoro (2022) note, though the role of principals involves more than just coordination between systems, they also act as representatives of the schools in provincial or ministry meetings while working behind-the-scenes to become a bridge between different bodies involved in education locally such as municipal councils alongside education boards. Therefore, effective secondary school principals use their excellent leadership abilities to navigate the complexities around teaching and learning, balancing their management duties alongside communication skills, so they can be focused on providing students with quality educational experiences.

## Emotional intelligence and principals' effectiveness

A growing body of literature continues to highlight the critical role played by emotional intelligence (EI) when it comes to determining the effectiveness levels exhibited by school principals worldwide. At its core, EI involves understanding

one's own feelings as well as being capable of effectively managing them alongside those displayed by others around them (Goleman, 1995). Empirical studies have consistently noted that individuals occupying leadership positions who display strong competencies across various domains associated with emotional intelligence enjoy greater success when it comes to managing schools efficiently (Brackett, Rivers & Salovey, 2011). A study conducted in the United States reported that school principals who scored higher on EI measures had lower teacher turnover rates, and higher levels of job satisfaction among staff members (Marinelli, Zarei & Mihai, 2016). Similar studies conducted in Malaysia discovered that school administrators with higher levels of emotional intelligence had better results in terms of student accomplishment (Haron, Yusoff & Samah, 2019).

However, the study by Garcia-Nieto and Dominguez-Lara (2017), which highlights the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) when evaluating principal effectiveness, has some significant drawbacks. For instance, relying solely on self-report measures to gather data about individuals' levels of emotional intelligence may not necessarily reflect an accurate picture (Joseph & Newman 2010). Additionally, we are still grappling with identifying the particular EI competencies that are most essential for successful school leadership. Nonetheless, investing in professional development opportunities to cultivate principals' emotional intelligence could result in improved academic performance for students. How Principals can improve on their Emotional Intelligence. A wide range of skills are required for the position of school principal, including highly developed emotional intelligence abilities that enable effective relationships with both staff and students. To achieve this goal, the following five key strategies are suggestions that could prove invaluable:

1. **Self-reflection:** Engaging in regular reflection activities like journaling or meditation can help increase the principal's self-awareness while identifying personal triggers or biases that may be hindering their effectiveness.
2. **Training programmes:** Participating in targeted training programmes focusing on enhancing emotional intelligence skills provides an excellent opportunity for principals to explore new strategies related to managing emotions; and building relationships with staff and students.
3. **Seek feedback:** Gathering feedback from colleagues is a critical step in developing self-awareness as a leader. Principals must pay attention to others' perceptions of their emotional intelligence considering this input when making adjustments to their leadership styles.
4. **Mindfulness practice:** By implementing mindfulness practices into daily routines, principals can increase self-regulation and focus, both of which are essential skills for any effective leader looking to lead with depth and compassion. Mindfulness practices such as meditation, deep breathing, and yoga can help principals manage stress and regulate their emotions more effectively.
5. **Foster positive relationships:** Principals can work to build positive relationships with their staff and students, which can help to increase their empathy and social skills. They can make an effort to listen actively, communicate clearly, and show appreciation for the contributions of others.

For sure, Principals of secondary schools can improve their emotional intelligence through self-reflection, training and development, seeking feedback, practicing mindfulness, and fostering positive relationships with staff and students. By improving their emotional intelligence, principals can become more effective leaders, and create a more positive and supportive school culture.

### Empirical review

The study of Obiekwe and Ogbo (2020) on Principals' emotional intelligence and their Administrative Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State, adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 6,382 teachers in the six education zones of Anambra State. A sample size of 672 teachers was drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique. The researchers developed research instruments titled "Principals' Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire" (PEIQ) and "Principals' Performance Questionnaire" (PPQ) were utilised for data collection. The instruments were subjected to internal consistency test using the Cronbach alpha method which yielded 0.89 and 0.84 respectively. Mean score and Pearson' Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze data for the study. Results reveal that there is a significant relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and their performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State with correlation coefficient ( $r$ )=0.57 and  $p$ -value <0.05. The bearing this study has in our study is that it provides a template for us to carry out our own research.

Ojokuku, Oyewunmi and Adeniji (2012) research delved into the link between emotional intelligence and leadership qualities among Nigerian school principals. According to the findings, emotional intelligence is a critical component of successful leadership, especially when it comes to managing others. Likewise, Elegbeleye and Oladipo's (2018) findings align with Ojokuku et al.'s (2012) research results. Ojokuku, et al. (2012) similarly found that principals with higher levels of EI had better rated leadership across multiple dimensions evaluated by staff members. Secondary schools in Oyo State were the focus of this research project that explored whether there was a connection between the level of principals' emotional intelligence and their perceived success as leaders. One hundred and two (102) principals participated in this study, and the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ i) was used to measure their level of self-awareness regarding emotions while Leadership Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD) provided insight into management skills they use to lead effectively at work.

After analyzing data collected from both instruments, researchers discovered that principals who demonstrated higher levels of emotional intelligence were seen as more effective leaders by their staff. This study highlights the need to develop specific training programmes and policies to assist principals in enhancing social-emotional competencies in themselves and the teachers they lead.

## 6. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilised a quantitative approach, that employed a structured questionnaire for data collection. Through random sampling technique, ninety-two (92) principals from both public (46) and private (46) secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria were selected from each of the 23 local government areas in the state; two from private secondary schools, and two from public secondary schools. The 92 principals served as the population as well as the sample size of the study, therefore making it a census survey. The usage of a population as a sample size is justified by scholars like Ifeakor (2009) and Guanah (2022) who argue that this can be done when the population figure is small.

A questionnaire instrument that has two sections, titled “Principals Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire” (PEIQ) and “Principals’ Job Effectiveness Questionnaire” (PJEQ) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was validated by three education experts, and internal consistency reliability coefficients of 0.89 for the PEIQ and 0.84 for PJEQ were obtained using Cronbach’s alpha method. The copies of the questionnaire were administered physically to the respondents by the researchers and two research assistants were engaged. Data obtained for the study were analysed using simple percentages and tables.

## 7. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Characteristics	Frequency	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	60	65.22
Female	32	34.78
<b>Age</b>		
40-45	16	17.39
46-49	42	45.65
50-55	25	27.18
56-above	9	9.78
<b>Education</b>		
Tertiary education	56	60.87
Postgraduate education	36	39.13

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows that there were more men (65.22%) than women (34.78%). The implication is that men are in secondary schools’ leadership positions. However, this may be as a result of where the study was carried out. The age demography indicates that 42 (45.65%) were between the age bracket of 46-49; this implies that most of the principals must be very active, considering their young ages. The principals were either graduates or post graduates. This fits well with the objectives of the study that has to do with emotional intelligence of those who handle the affairs of students.

**Table 2: Respondents’ Marital Status**

Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Single</b>	5	5.43
<b>Married</b>	87	94.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The implication of Table 2 is that most of the principals are married.

**Table 3: Educational Specialization**

Responses	Frequency	%
Education	49	53.26
Psychology	13	14.14
Guardian and counselling	12	13.04
Religious studies	9	9.78
Human resources	9	9.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 revealed that most of the principals are educationists, as they studies Education as a course I the university. Likert - type five points rating scale and dichotomous was used: 5= Strongly Agree (SA), 4=Agree (A), 3= Undecided (U), 2= Strongly Disagree (SD), and 1= Disagree (D) responses as well as open ended questions.

**Table 4:** Emotional intelligence is significantly related to the effectiveness of principals` of secondary schools in Rivers State

Responses	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	32	34.78
Agree	24	26.09
Undecided	6	6.52
Disagree	19	20.65
Strongly Disagree	11	11.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data from Table 4 show that emotional intelligence is significantly related to the effectiveness of principals` of secondary schools in Rivers State

**Table 5:** Component that has the strongest effect on the principals

Responses	Frequency	%
Self-awareness	20	21.74
Self-regulation	17	18.48
Self-motivation	18	19.56
Empathy	17	18.48
Social skills	20	21.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data in Table 5 revealed that self-awareness and social skills have the strongest effect on the principals among the five components.

**Table 6:** Component that has the lowest effect on the principals

Responses	Frequency	%
Self-awareness	17	18.48
Self-regulation	19	20.65
Self-motivation	21	22.83
Empathy	17	18.48
Social skills	18	19.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Data in Table 6 revealed that self-motivation has the lowest effect on the principals among the five components.

**Table 7:** Extent to which emotional intelligence can be used to measure principals` effectiveness

Responses	Frequency	%
Very Large Extent	35	38.04
Large Extent	27	29.35
Undecided	2	2.17
Very Low Extent	18	19.57
Low Extent	10	10.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The implication of Table 7 above is that emotional intelligence is considered as a veritable tool for measuring principals` effectiveness.

**Table 8:** Necessity of emotional intelligence in determining principals` leadership abilities.

Responses	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	26	28.26
Agree	34	36.96
Undecided	4	4.34
Strongly Disagree	14	15.22
Disagree	14	15.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

In Table 8 above, the data show that most of the respondents align themselves with the fact that emotional intelligence is necessary in determining principals' leadership abilities.

**Table 9:** Level of importance of emotional intelligence in education

Responses	Frequency	%
Very Important	31	33.69
Important	24	26.09
Undecided	6	6.52
Not Very Important	16	17.40
Not Important	15	16.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 9 shows that most of the respondents consider emotional intelligence to be important in education.

**Table 10:** Emotional intelligence as a template for information, discussion and debate on leadership in education

Responses	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	34	36.96
Agree	29	31.52
Undecided	7	7.60
Strongly Disagree	16	17.40
Disagree	6	6.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From Table 10, a significant number of the respondents expressed the fact that emotional intelligence serves as a template for information, discussion and debate on leadership in education

## 8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found a strong link between secondary school administrators' effectiveness and emotional intelligence in Rivers State, Nigeria. This outcome is consistent with several other research studies that have demonstrated a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and successful leadership outcomes across various contexts (Elegbeleye & Oladipo, 2018). The results of Obiekwe and Ogbo's (2020) investigations, which indicated a substantial correlation between principals' emotional intelligence and their performance in public secondary schools in Anambra State are also supported by this finding. If the principal is emotionally intelligent, he or she will be able to sense the climate of the school and develop the necessary skills to carry out his or her administrative responsibilities successfully. In order to be able to carry out successful communication, decision-making, and instructional supervision, principals must have a high level of emotional intelligence that will equip them with excellent interpersonal skills.

Principals who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to comprehend and address their staff and student's needs. Similarly, the outcomes of Nwankwo, Emenike, and Adedjoja's (2016) inquiry into public secondary schools situated in Anambra state support this finding by correlating positive instances of principals' effectiveness with increased emotional intelligence levels. Therefore cultivating one's emotional intelligence can contribute significantly to successful leadership within secondary schools. According to research by Ezenibe and Akubues (2017) done in Nigeria, emotional intelligence is a critical factor in influencing the effectiveness of principals in secondary schools.

The second finding of this study showed that self-awareness and social skills have the strongest effect on the principals among the five components of self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. This can be seen from the data as shown in Table 5; Self-awareness and Social skills were 20 (21.74%) each, well above Self-regulation and Empathy were 17 (18.48%) each, and Self-motivation was 18 (19.56%). While emotional intelligence involves five components, research suggests that the specific components that have the strongest effect on a principal's effectiveness may vary based on the context and the demands of their role. However, this finding agrees with some studies that suggest that self-awareness and social skills are particularly important for principals.

To support this finding further Ezenibe and Akubues (2017) reinforce their findings by emphasising self-awareness's importance above all else concerning successful school leadership whilst Ogbuabor and Ejionueme (2018) similarly conclude that both self-awareness and social skill development contribute significantly towards developing successful school leaders. When it comes to being an effective leader in schools, having strong social skills is key; studies by Elegbeleye and Oladipo (2018) and Nwankwo et al. (2016) support this idea.

Thirdly, this study identified that self-motivation has the lowest effect on the principals, this is despite the fact that it is difficult to determine which of the five components of emotional intelligence - self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills - has the lowest effect on principals, as the importance of each component can vary depending on the context and the demands of the role.

However, it is worth noting that the exact weighting of each component can vary depending on specific contextual factors and job demands. Despite this nuance evidence suggests that self-motivation may not be a crucial aspect of

effective “principalship”- for instance Ogbuabor and Ejionueme (2018) found no significant link between this area and effectiveness. In Nigeria, research (Elegbeleye & Oladipo, 2018) has shown that while some aspects of emotional intelligence (such as self-awareness or empathy) had positive effects on principals' job satisfaction levels - one particular component held less importance: their level of self-motivation. It should be noted though that since emotional intelligence is such an intricate concept - its significance for specific individuals might fluctuate based on different contexts or roles. Even if being motivated does not necessarily impact effectiveness as much as some other facets do for principals - there are still benefits from cultivating this aspect in order to attain a full set of emotional intelligence skills.

## 9. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The paper empirically examined an important area (emotional intelligence and school administrators' efficiency) in Nigerian secondary schools, particularly Rivers State's education sector, which has underperformed in the West African Examination Council (WAEC) examinations over the years. Since Rivers State secondary education has struggled, talking about emotional intelligence and principals will reawaken secondary school administrators in the state and beyond.

## 10. CONCLUSION

Investigating how emotionality contributes to principals' efficacy in secondary schools situated within Rivers State, Nigeria was at the forefront of this study. The study revealed that there are significant correlations between possessing higher levels of emotional understanding in relevance to more capable management by Principals. Particularly, the study put forward the prominence of emotional attributes such as self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills in creating a successful school environment.

Since emotional intelligence is significantly related to the effectiveness of principals of secondary schools, the government and education stakeholders in Rivers State should organize training and development programmes for principals in secondary schools to improve their emotional intelligence skills. Such programmes should focus on improving self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills.

The government and education stakeholders in Rivers State should consider emotional intelligence as a selection criterion when recruiting principals for secondary schools, especially those who display the components that have the strongest effect on the principals. This will guarantee that the principals have the emotional intelligence abilities needed to properly run the school.

Principals that display components that have the lowest effect on the principals should be supported so that they can improve their emotional intelligence skills. This can be achieved through personal development programmes, attending emotional intelligence workshops and seminars, and seeking feedback from teachers, students, and other stakeholders.

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