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Emotional Intelligence and Employee Performance: A Study of Teachers in Secondary Schools in Benue State, Nigeria

Juliet Abeyi Otor¹ & Terungwa P. T. Jato¹

¹Department of Business Administration, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

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*Corresponding Email: julietabeyiotor@gmail.com

Abstract

The study's goal was to look into the impact of emotional intelligence on teacher performance in secondary schools in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. The study was based on the theory of emotional intelligence as propounded by Daniel Goleman in 2002. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. The sample comprises 160 secondary school teachers and administrators from 15 schools. A structured questionnaire was used to collect relevant data. Descriptive and regression analyses were used in the analysis. The paper's theoretical review is based on Goleman's works (2002). Four emotional intelligence constructs (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) were used, as were the study's objectives. The findings revealed a link between emotional intelligence and secondary school teachers' performance. It is recommended, among other things, that the concept of emotional intelligence be clearly inculcated in the recruitment and selection criteria of secondary school teachers.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, teachers' performance, self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of people's emotions has always been a component in determining the potential results when evaluating the human elements at work in any company. The potential for problem-solving or inspiring others to take a particular action or accomplish a shared target has not always been acknowledged, despite the good potential inherent in this interaction of emotions. However, the prevalent view in many circumstances has been to minimize or mitigate the impact that emotions play in problem-solving or decision-making. Because of this, sociologists and psychologists have studied how employing emotions in the leadership process can help to mitigate negative results or promote positive outcomes in any leadership setting. The majority of this analysis is located in the area of research now referred to as emotional intelligence (EI).

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) which is gaining its way in the vocabulary of every manager, is a relatively recent invention that first appeared in the management literature in 1990. Mayer and Salovey were the ones who originally used it (1990). Their definition of emotional intelligence states that it "involves the capacity to accurately perceive, appraise, and express emotion; the capacity to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the capacity to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the capacity to regulate emotions, to promote emotional and intellectual growth." This implies that an employee must be able to recognize and control both their intra-relationships (internal sentiments and disturbances) and their inter-relationships (recognizing and controlling the emotions of others, such as coworkers, students, friends, etc.).

In the educational system, teachers who are trained to train students, face chaos, uncertainties, and friction with their employers and students likely because of the negligence of emotions which are critical part of the decision-making process. The administrators of secondary schools also seem to give less attention to the emotional health of their employees (teachers) which are of a high significance in educational settings as it influences how they feel and look, what they do, how they do it, etc., which ultimately may affect their performance. Management concentrates more on what these teachers are been paid to do neglecting their emotional state and social interactions per time which suggest whether or not the expected output will be actualized. The effect of such neglect can be seen in the quality of students. Teachers have to deal with a great deal of emotional vulnerability in the students they interact with. These students who most times struggle with the emotional instability characteristic of preadolescence and adolescence as well as the feelings of rejection, apathy, self-hate and sense of hopelessness, resulting to some dropping out of school. A situation that can be handled if teachers are able to recognize and understand their emotions, thereby using their emotional intelligence to also handle the emotions of the students, hence drastically reducing the rate of school drop-outs. It, thus, takes teachers who are emotionally intelligent to be able to handle the emotional disturbances of the students. Employees (i.e., teachers) in the education sector, therefore, need to understand both their intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions so as to performance effectively.

Despite its importance, very little research has attempted to examine the impact that emotional intelligence plays in the education system, particularly in Benue State. This study, which examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee performance with a focus on teachers in secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria, was motivated by the need to propose practical answers to these troubling circumstances. It is believed that this would provide empirical data that can serve as the foundation for initiatives designed to increase the emotional intelligence of these secondary school teachers and the administration.

The work is organized into five sections with an introduction as the first section. Following the introduction is the literature review, which contains the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical reviews. The third section is methodology, comprising data type

and source, variable and model specification, and techniques of analysis. Results and discussion are presented in the fourth section with a conclusion and recommendations making the fifth section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theory of emotional intelligence was propounded by Daniel Goleman, a psychologist, in 2002. He popularized the concept of EI as being comprised of four constructs; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

According to him, emotionally intelligent people are aware of their emotions and how they behave and perform in response to them. They continue to be conscious of their actions. The ability to perceive one's own emotions and how they affect others' emotions is the basis of self-awareness, according to the author. This ability can either limit or empower one's own emotional reaction. He added that self-aware people have the power to influence, modify, and change their own conduct as well as the behavior of others. From the foregoing, the meaning of self-awareness as the first element of EI theory is that "you understand you". That is, when you understand your strengths and weaknesses as a person, and a leader, you can then understand why you feel, what makes you feel. You can understand your emotions; you can identify their impact to you and those in your team. This makes the element very relevant to a secondary school teacher (or an administrator) because as he/she gets to recognize him/herself emotionally, he/she will be able to also identify, resolve and manage the emotional issues of the students as well as the employees.

According to Goleman (2002), self-management refers to a leader's ability to control their emotions and maintain composure both internally and externally, regardless of the complexity or unpredictability of the situations they come across in a social or professional setting. According to his theory, a person will become emotionally out of control if they are unable to comprehend their feelings. Negative emotions like anger, rage, and anxiety tend to dominate an individual's emotional state and can become all-consuming, which can overwhelm the leaders-followers' capacity to "focus on the task in hand," according to Goleman. In contrast, positive emotions like enthusiasm, excitement, and jubilation are acceptable emotional states. Typically, this has a detrimental impact on the performance. The second component of Goleman's emotional intelligence theory calls for you to maintain control over your words and actions while resisting the need to act hastily. According to this component, the study anticipates that administrators and teachers would be aware of their emotions and work to gain control over them in order to prevent making snap decisions and the detrimental impacts these have on the kids.

The third component of emotional intelligence theory—social awareness—allows the instructor to sympathize with others (students and team members) as necessary. Social awareness is a component of emotional intelligence that is linked to empathy. Thus, it can be used to assess employee effectiveness and performance at work. Goleman identifies this element as another social competence. According to Bradberry and Greaves, who were referenced by Goleman in 2002, a highly skilled leader-follower can lose their competence if they are not adept at managing relationships.

This fourth and final element from Goleman's emotional intelligence theory relationship management involves using and controlling one's knowledge of one's own emotions as well as those of others in order to promote constructive interactions and exchanges. Relationship management, he continued, is extremely difficult given our individual differences. Hence, the need to study emotional intelligence to acquire skills needed for effective relationship management.

In summary, the theory opines that the more a leader is in control and can manage each of these elements, the higher his or her emotional intelligence. A more concise summary of

the theory of emotional intelligence by Goleman (2002) is Self-recognition and self-regulation. This indicates that a person will be able to control his or her emotions, i.e., self-management and relationship management, as soon as he or she is able to recognize himself or herself (self-awareness and social awareness). The framework for measuring emotional intelligence in this study is based on Goleman's dimensions or measures of emotional intelligence.

The study was hinged on Goleman's Emotional Intelligence theory because it provides sufficient information on the subject matter as can be seen in the four elements in the theory—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management which are the main elements that form the objectives for the study. It is expected that as a teacher or administrator in secondary school is able to understand and assess him/herself accurately, becomes empathetic, self-controlled, calm, stable, initiative and influential in the work place, the or she will perform much better in the work place.

Conceptual Framework

Mayer and Salovey (1990) initially used the term "emotional intelligence" (EI) to describe a mental process in which previously separate factors like thinking and emotions now cooperate. According to them, "Emotional Intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. The EI model developed by Mayer and Salovey views EI as a set of cognitive abilities that exists in varying degrees in all humans, and has significant implications for management and leadership. They noted that using this model, EI accounts for one's ability to identify feelings and express emotions, as well as to recognize emotions in others. It addresses the use of emotions to direct attention, facilitate thought, make decisions or solve problems, as well as to understand the relationship between emotions and to manage the emotions of self and others.

George (2000) asserts that EI is the degree in which emotions are cognitively managed. Stein (2009), on the other hand, defines EI as the ability to "tune in to the world, read situations and to connect with others whilst taking charge of your own life". This implies that in order to master other people's emotions, one must be in charge of his/her emotions.

From the above definitions of emotional intelligence by the different authors, it can be deduced that EI concerns three main aspects;

- 1). Understanding oneself, own responses, goals and behavior.
- 2). Understanding others and their feelings.
- 3). Regulating and managing your emotions and that of others

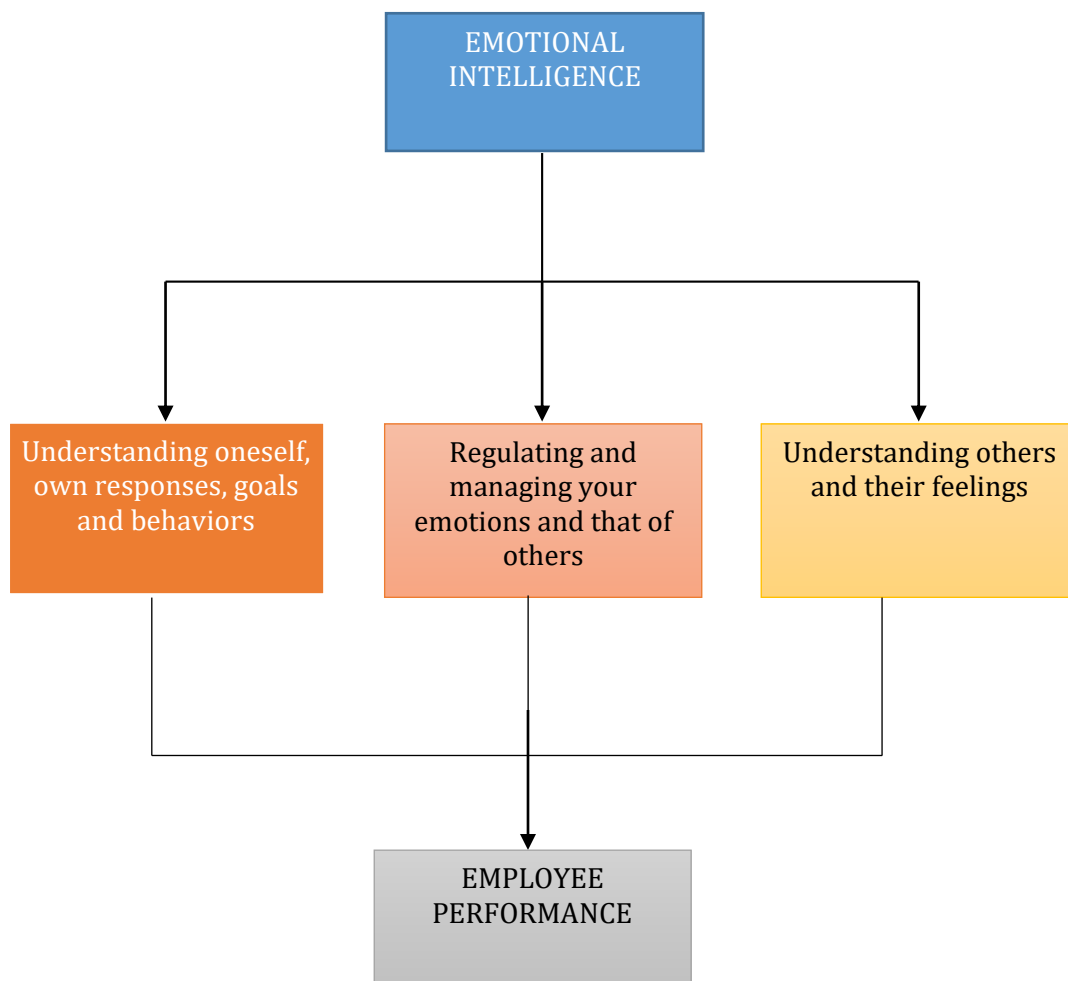
Employee (Teacher) Performance

Sabine et al. (2010) observed that the concept and definition of individual performance has received considerable scholarly research attention over the past 15 to 20 years. According to them, researchers agree that performance has to be considered as a multi-dimensional concept.

They further observed that on the most basic level, one can distinguish between a process aspect (i.e., behavioral) and an outcome aspect of performance. The behavioral aspect refers to what people do while at work, the action itself. In their opinion performance encompasses specific behavior (e.g., sales conversations with customers, teaching statistics to undergraduate students, programming computer software, assembling parts of a product). This conceptualization implies that only actions that can be scaled (i.e., counted) are regarded as performance.

According to Thao and Hwang (2015), performance is associated with quantity of output, quality of output, timeliness of output, presence and attendance on the job, efficiency of the work completed and effectiveness of work completed. He noted that employee, in this case, teacher performance, is the successful completion of tasks by a selected individual or individuals, as set and measured by a supervisor or organization, to pre-defined acceptable standards while efficiently and effectively utilizing available resource within a changing environment. Citing Aguinis, Thao and Hwang (2015) described that “the definition of performance does not include the results of an employee’s behavior, but only the behaviors themselves. Performance is about behavior or what employees do, not about what employees produce or the outcomes of their work”. He further observed that perceived employee performance represents the general belief of the employee about his behavior and contributions in the success of organization. In his opinion, employee performance may be taken in the perspective of three factors which makes possible to perform better than others, determinants of performance may be such as “declarative knowledge”, “procedural knowledge” and “motivation”

Bustasar, Sumarsih and Nugroho (2019) proposed five human resource management practices that affect performance which are setting competitive compensation level, training and development, performance appraisal, recruitment package, and maintaining morale. Employee performance can be defined summarily as the job-related activities expected of a worker and how well those activities were executed at the work place.



Source: Designed by the researchers

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Linking Emotional Intelligence and Employee Performance)

Viewed from figure 1 is the framework that conceptually explains the relationship that exists between EI and employee performance. This, applied to the study is that, EI, through self-awareness (i.e., understanding oneself, own responses, goals and behaviors), self-management (regulating and managing your emotions and that of others), and social-awareness (empathy: understanding others and their feelings) exert influence on the performance of employee of an organization.

Empirical Review

Though a relatively new area, there are several works that have traced the effect of emotional intelligence on employee performance in various jobs. One of such is that by Ilhan (2011) who examined the level of emotional intelligence of some of the demographic variables of the teachers working in the province of Gaziantep and found that emotional intelligence does not differ according to age, gender and marital status variants. Similarly, Lee and Siti, (2015) revealed that all the four dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal, use of emotions and regulation of emotions) were positively significantly associated with job performance.

In another study, Sanchez (2015) tested the influence of emotional intelligence on a person's success in respect to teaching performance of the tertiary faculty of Caraga State University and found a significantly high influence of emotional intelligence on teaching performance, imply that emotional intelligence stimulate show successful a person in in teaching. Arthi and Sumathi (2016) also found a positive correlation between all the factors of emotional intelligence and job performance from a cross sectional study of 113 teachers working in private schools. His findings indicate further that the correlation between EI and job performance was different across teachers' age, working experience at present organisation, while no significant difference existed across teaching grade and qualification of teachers. Found also is that there is significant difference between gender in terms of EI and not with job performance. In their study, Hilda, Hope and Nnenne (2016) found a strong negative relationship between empathy and employee turnover when seeking to determine the influence of EI on employee performance of some Banks in Anambra State.

Asrar-ul-Haq, Anwar and Hassan (2017) investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on teacher's job performance in the education sector of Pakistan and discovered that emotional intelligence has a significant impact on the teacher's job performance. emotional self-awareness, self-confidence, achievement, developing others and conflict management revealed a positive and significant relationship on teacher's job performance. Dhani and Sharma (2017) examined the nature and extent of correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance with respect to the gender of the respondents. They found that female employees score more on EI than their male counterparts and were equally found to perform better on the job than men.

Olise (2018) is another study that examined the effect of emotional intelligence on employee's performance in the Nigerian Banking Industry with the discovery that self-control, self-awareness social-competencies and emotion management positively correlate employees' performance in the Nigerian Banking Industry. Gong, Chen and Wang (2019), in another related sturdy, sought to find out the directional influence of emotional intelligence on job performance and job burnout. In their findings, it was revealed that employees' EI has a positive predictive effect on psychological capital and job performance, and it is negatively correlated with job burnout; psychological capital has a negative predictive effect on job burnout and a positive predictive effect on job performance; and psychological capital plays a mediating role in the relationship between EI and job burnout/performance. A study by Ezzi (2019) is also in this category. It determined if higher teaching performance in the practicum courses was positively correlated to higher emotional intelligence among male and female student-teachers, who enrolled in the English Department of the Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University. It also investigates gender differences in EI among the

third and fourth-year student-teachers, and whether they are aware of the concept of EI and its influence on learning and teaching English. The findings revealed the teachers have good level of teaching performance and a quite high level of EI but not significantly correlated, which means that EI isn't a significant predictor of the student-teachers' good performance in teaching. Furthermore, gender differences in the student-teachers' EI are so simple and not of great significance.

Naz et al. (2019) researched into the link between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behavior and its underlying mechanism in Pakistan. Their findings inferred that emotional intelligence is positively associated with knowledge sharing behavior, and job satisfaction and organizational commitment mediates the relation between emotional intelligence and knowledge sharing behaviour. Also, Serhan and Gazzaz (2019) found a significant positive impact of self-management, self-awareness, and relationship management on employee performance with no impact on social awareness on employee performance when they studied the impact of emotional intelligence on employee performance Saudi Arabia's banking sector. Equally, Alonazi (2020) found that nurses in critical care units had the highest levels of emotional intelligence, followed by nurses in intensive care, nurses caring for newborns in intensive care, general nurses, and nurses in respiratory therapy, with nurses in respiratory therapy having the lowest levels of emotional intelligence. They discovered that nurses reported a substantial effect of EI on job performance throughout the COVID-19 crisis management phase across all groups.

A cross-sectional analysis of predictors of employee brand-based equity by Luand Ishak (2020) revealed that teachers' emotional intelligence increases their self-efficacy, which further boosts their brand-based equity. Emotional intelligence also improves teachers' performance, which raises their brand equity. Al-Shdaifat, and Al-Zyoud (2021) intended to determine the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on job performance among employees in the Gulf Area and discovered a strong correlation between the two. A study by Singh and Ryhal (2021) that looked at the impact of teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) on academic accomplishment also found that the emotional skills of instructors were strongly and favorably related to students' academic achievement.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was used because it involves a large population from which samples are selected, studied and analyzed in a bid to find out relative incidence, distribution and interrelations between variables.

Data used

Primary data was collected from 169 teachers in 15 schools, which were purposively selected out of 647 teachers from the 199 secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The instrument used is 'Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment Questionnaire' structured in the Likert scale point where Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with a corresponding nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The suitability of the instrument was tested using the face validity method, while reliability test was done using the Cronbach alpha test which proved the consistency of the instrument with 0.787 score indicating a high level of internal consistency of scale.

Variable specification/Model Specification

The two main variables for the study are emotional intelligence (the independent variable) and teacher performance (the dependent variable). Emotional intelligence was measured in terms of self-awareness, self-management and social awareness and teacher performance was measured in terms of employee commitment, employee loyalty, employee creativity, employee innovativeness, timeliness, job satisfaction, adherence to policies,

completion of tasks, and minimization of gossips and other personal habits. The inferred relationship between these is expressed as:

$$TP = f(EI) \tag{1}$$

where

TP = Teacher Performance

EI = Emotional Intelligence

However,

$$EI = f(SA, SM, SOA) \tag{2}$$

where

EI = as above

SA = self-awareness

SM = self-management

SOA = social awareness

Substituting (3) into (4) gives

$$TP = f(SA, SM, SOA) \tag{3}$$

Its explicit form is given thus:

$$TP = \alpha + \beta_1SA_i + \beta_2SM_i + \beta_3SOA_i + \mu \tag{4}$$

where

α = constant

μ = error term

β_{1-3} = the coefficients

All other variables remain the same.

Data Analysis Technique

Inferential and descriptive statistics were employed for analysis. Descriptive statistics involved the use of percentages and simple frequencies were used for a descriptive analysis of the variables, while inferential statistic of regression analysis was conducted using SPSS to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Through proper coding, the qualitative data collected was transformed into regression compatible data which further analysis was performed on.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation

A total of 169 questionnaires were distributed out of which 160 were correctly filled and returned. These respondents ranged in age from 25 to 60 years, with 70.1% of them being men and 29.9% being women. The teachers had the following levels of education: post-graduate (32, 22.2%), HND/B.Sc. (102, 70.5%), and ND/NCE (10, 6.9%). The professors' combined years of teaching experience ranged from 1 to more than 20.

Regression Results

The results from the regression analysis, which was performed to test the effect of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management and social-awareness) on teacher performance with the aid of SPSS are summarized as follows:

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation

	Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Employee Performance	3.3349	.61981	160
Self-awareness	3.3135	.41709	160
Self-management	3.0822	.54624	160
Social-awareness	3.4531	.37683	160

Source: Authors' computation, using SPSS 25.0, 2022.

Table 2: Results of Coefficient Regression Analysis

Variable/Model	Beta Coefficient	t-value	Sig.
Self-awareness (SA)	0.140	1.808	0.07
Self-management (SM)	0.157	2.009	0.04
Social awareness(SOA)	0.248	3.191	0.02

Source: Authors' computation, using SPSS 25.0, 2022.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted square	Durbin Watson
1	0.394	0.155	0.139	1.936
F = 9.563		(Sig. = 0.000)		

Source: Authors' computation, using SPSS 25.0, 2022.

Discussion of Results/Findings

The values in Table 1 are the means and standard deviation of the variables used in the analysis. The distribution shows that, information about the variables were within the acceptable bounds of ≥ 2.5 and as such judged to be significant in measuring the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The results thus provide preliminary support for a significant relationship of emotional intelligence and teacher performance.

Table 2 displays the findings of the hierarchical regression coefficients for the association between teacher effectiveness and emotional intelligence. The results demonstrate a positive link between teacher effectiveness and self-awareness ($=0.140$, $t=1.808$, >0.05). This finding lends credence to the idea that teachers who are self-aware and capable of identifying their own emotions would not only be able to manage or improve their own emotional reactions but also those of their students. The results show a favorable relationship between self-management, social awareness, and teacher performance ($=0.157$, $t=2.009$, 0.05 , and $(=0.248$, $t=3.191$, $0.05)$, further supporting our a priori predictions.

These findings are consistent with the argument that teachers who control their emotions and take deep interest in the feeling of others, will not only take best decisions under pressure but will also help the emotional responses within others. And those who have the intellect of recognizing the emotions and feeling of others, are more likely to take best decisions to respond to and empathize with those they interact with (students, colleagues, parents, etc.) in their emotional struggles. These results do not differ from those of the findings of the of the studies earlier reviewed, except with the part of Serhan and Gazzaz (2019), who found that social awareness have no impact on employee performance. Equally, the study did not extend further to disaggregate the effect according to age, gender, and experience as done by Arthi and Sumathi (2016); and Asrar-ul-Haq et al. (2017) did but kept it whole as most of the other studies did.

According to the results, instructors who have emotional intelligence and are able to use it in their work would be more effective at their employment. This shows that improving teachers' emotional intelligence will result in a noticeable improvement in their performance. The findings suggest that emotionally intelligent teachers are able to use this ability to focus attention, encourage thought, make decisions, or resolve issues, as well as to comprehend the relationship between emotions and to control their own and others' emotions. Their performance levels may rise and improve as a result.

The model summary results are as in Table 3, from which it can be seen that emotional intelligence as a whole has a positive and significant effect on teacher performance in secondary schools. The model summary gives a coefficient of determination, R², of 0.155 (with an adjusted R² of 0.139) and overall significance of the model, F = 9.563, Sig= 0.000 ($\rho < 0.05$), which shows that the model is fit to measure the relationship between the variables. However, the variation in the dependent variable (Teachers' Performance: TP) is

not fully explained by the regression model as indicated by the low value of the R square. By the R squared, model attributes only 15.5% of variations in teachers' performance to emotional intelligence. This means that emotional intelligence only causes a 15.5% (or 13.9%, if adjusted) variations in teachers' performance, leaving 84.5% (or 86.1%) to other variables. In other words, only 15.5% of the times that there is increase in teachers' performance, that it is as a result of the improvement in teachers' emotional intelligence. This indicates that, though emotional intelligence influences the performance of the teachers in Makurdi, changes in teachers' performance in Makurdi can be said to be more accounted for by other factors not considered by the study.

CONCLUSION

Attaining the most feasible performance is considered as the most significant aim of all organizations. As a result, the majority of organizations now view emotional intelligence as a crucial factor in attaining long-term performance and the growth of competitive advantage. According to the study, emotional intelligence plays a significant impact in improving performance, showing that people with high levels of emotional intelligence also perform very well at work. From the theoretical review (the Daniel Goleman EI theory, 2002), it can be concluded that an emotionally intelligent secondary school teacher is able to understand and assess him/herself accurately, becomes empathetic, self-controlled, calm, stable, initiative, and influential in the workplace, this improves positive outcomes immensely.

In like manner, the findings of this study which shows that: there is a significant and positive relationship between self-awareness, self-management and social awareness and teacher performance in the secondary school, have led to the conclusion that aimed emotional intelligence has effect on teachers' performance in secondary schools in Makurdi.

Arising from the forging, it is recommended that proper attention and priority should be given to emotional intelligence as a potent tool for improving performance. This has a work multiplier effect more than other motivating factors such as salaries, incentives and other benefits. This is so, as employees that possess emotional intelligence are not just successful in their career but influence others through their interactions thereby causing others to also attain success.

The attention can come conscious promotion of the concept of emotional intelligence and its effect on performance through seminars, workshops and other educative programmes which can be organized in secondary schools.

Limitations of the Study

As suitable and adequate as the study is, it is limited as it could not cover other levels of the educational industry. Extending it to the primary and tertiary will validate the effects of EI on teachers' performance.

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