
Implementing Policies in Early Childhood and Primary Education: Emotional Intelligence and Lecturers' Attitudes to Work in Public Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

The paper investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and lecturers' attitudes to work in public universities in Rivers State. This study adopted a correlation research design, three research questions and hypotheses guided the study. A sample size of 590 consisting of 296 academic staff for the University of Port Harcourt, 197 for Rivers State University and 97 for Ignatius Ajuru University of Education was selected for the study using a proportionate simple random sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire titled: "Emotional Intelligence Lecturers' Work Attitude Questionnaire" (EILWAQ) was used for the study. The items are scored on a four – point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). The reliability index of 0.795 was gotten for Self-Awareness, 0.832 for Self-Regulation, and 0.865 for Empathy using the Cronbach's alpha model. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used to answer the research questions and test hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that dimensions of emotional intelligence; self-awareness, self-regulations and empathy have a low positive relationship with lecturers' attitude to work with correlation coefficient ranging from 0.20-0.67. based on the findings it was recommended among others, universities should develop organisational work environments that promote emotional intelligence, thereby boosting the attitude to work of their staff.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Lecturers' attitudes to work, Public universities

INTRODUCTION

As a fundamental tool for implementing the curriculum, lecturers continue to be a highly important aspect that affects students' experiences, accomplishments, and ongoing educational development. This is no longer possible, though, as lecturers are treated with little to no respect in society as a result of a variety of factors, including a lack of funding, a lack of motivational incentives, and a delay in salary payments, all of which have an impact on lecturer activities and result in psychological and emotional stress, which in turn affects his output. It is unknown how teachers' gender affects students' academic achievement in primary science. While lectures have a big impact on students' academic performance, there are other characteristics that also affect how well they succeed academically, including socioeconomic status, family support, ability, personality, and interest. On the other hand, the lecturers' age, education, subject-matter expertise, and experience play a considerable effect in the academic success of the students (Abubakar, 2011).

Lecturers' work attitude is a very important determinant of their success or performance at the workplace. Okoroma (2016) posit that work attitudes are the feelings an individual has toward different aspects of his/her work environment. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two key attitudes that are the most relevant to important outcomes. How lecturers behave at work often depends on how they feel about being there. Therefore, making sense of how lecturers behave depends on understanding their work attitudes. However, the low academic performance of Nigerian students has been connected to the lecturers' ineffectiveness lack carrying out the instructional methodologies, which has resulted in low motivation. In each of these situations, how lecturers' react to students, one another and engage is crucial, in other to avoid being rude, egotistical, or verbally abusive in doing so. Thus, emotional intelligence comes into play in this situation (Iwundu, 2020).

The capacity to understand one's own emotions and control them in order to successfully communicate, overcome obstacles, and diffuse conflict is known as emotional intelligence. The relationship between emotional intelligence, work attitudes, and overall work-life balance among employees in any firm has been established by a number of authors. Any person's behaviour is influenced by their emotional intelligence. To perform well at work, employees need to be emotionally stable. In order to cope with the pressures and expectations of the environment, a person must have the abilities to recognize and comprehend both his or her own emotions as well as the emotions of others. According to Harni (2018), when people acknowledge and understand their emotions, it greatly aids because the person knows how and why they feel the way they do. It is simple to comprehend other people's activities when people are able to identify and comprehend their emotions. In a similar line, Mayer et al. (2000) said that persons with high emotional intelligence are able to handle their affairs well and interact with others in an efficient manner. In this way, they stated their belief that those who exhibit emotional intelligence are better able to understand their own emotions than those who are highly skilled at controlling the impacts of others in ways that produce value. Emotional intelligence is made up of five components which are self-awareness, social awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation and social skills. This study will be looking into the first three which are self-awareness, self-regulation and empathy.

Self-awareness reflects the ability of a high EI person to accurately identify how he/she projects himself/herself to others (Thomas, 2004). According to Goleman (2002) self-awareness is the foundation for the rest of the components. It is the ability to recognize which emotions, moods, and impulses one is experiencing and why. It is associated with emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence. Goleman (1995, 1998) argues that it is not only related to an individual's psychological insight and self-understanding; it also plays a key role in determining how an individual exhibits behaviours and interacts with others. Indeed, individuals who are highly confident, self-efficacious and aware of their emotions should be able to promote good job performance. This allows the high EI person to ensure that he/she projects the appropriate image to fit the situation. Self-awareness is having a clear and realistic perception of who you are. Employees who are engaged with their job and employer are more productive because they are motivated beyond personal factors. They are more focused and more motivated than their disengaged counterparts. This means they work more efficiently and with the success of the organization in mind. Research consistently shows that low levels of employee engagement are detrimental to performance. There is an assumption held by many scholars and managers that if employees are adequately informed about matters concerning them and are afforded the opportunity to make decisions relevant to their work, then there will be benefits for both the organisation and the individual (Shadur et al., 2011). In addition, being unable to control their emotions and moods may lead them into conflicts with others.

Self-regulation refers to the ability to control one's emotions and impulses and adapt to changing circumstances (Goleman, 2002). It also refers to the ability an individual has to regulate distressing effects such as anger and anxiety, and the ability to inhibit emotional impulsivity

(Goleman, 2000). A person with self-regulation ability appears calmer and more confident even in the midst of stressful conditions. The person also tends to be in control of his emotions and does not allow his emotion and impulses to dictate his decisions and actions. This includes emotional self-control, transparency, adaptability, achievement, initiative and optimism. However, individuals with low emotional intelligence and self-regulation are likely to have a poor history of nurturing, limit-setting and moral framework that promote spontaneity and frustration associated with unethical behaviour (Stephen et al., 2018).

Empathy includes the ability to recognize, understand and consider other people's feelings at the point of taking decisions. Empathy gives people an astute awareness of others' emotions, concerns, and needs. The empathic individual can read emotional currents, and picks up nonverbal cues such as tone of voice or facial expression (Goleman, 2009). In addition, leaders also need to be more empathetic and understanding toward their employees since this value will foster a sense of belonging among employees while creating employment sustainability which has proven to help many organizations to be more successful.

Recent studies showed that Karimah and Mujannah (2021) showed that all independent variables (organizational culture, competence and self-awareness) affect the Employee Performance variable. Similarly, Lontoh (2021) affirmed there is a significant relationship between self-awareness and a sense of belonging with professionalism. Moreso, Tentama, & Riskiyana, (2020) revealed a very significant correlation between social support and self-regulation and they simultaneously influence work readiness. Obimakinde et. al (2021) carried out a study on empathy and its correlates among medical doctors working in the University College Hospital. The study concluded that medical doctors possessed varying levels of empathy relative to their sociodemographic characteristics, specialty of choice and level of expertise. An overview of the empirical studies shows that there is dearth in literature on emotional intelligence and lecturers attitude to work in Rivers State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The success of specified educational aims and objectives is highly dependent on lecturers' attitudes about their employment in the educational system. Lack of innovation, inefficiency, and productivity among lecturers can pose a risk and damage the reputation of higher education institutions both nationally and internationally. Academic engagement in tertiary institutions has diminished as a result. In order to achieve the goals and objectives of the institution, tertiary universities require the services of staff who are qualified, driven, and well-trained and who can successfully assist academics in carrying out research. It is useful to note that the lecturers' emotional intelligence have a significant impact on how they approach their work and how they interact with students to enhance the teaching-learning process. This often can cause a lot of issues with the lecturers' work attitudes and performance in the various universities. This research work seeks to investigate the link between emotional intelligence and lecturers' attitudes to work in public universities in Rivers State.

Specifically, the objectives of study tend to;

1. examine the relationship between self-awareness and lecturers' attitude to work in Public Universities in Rivers State.
2. investigate the relationship between self-regulation and lecturers' attitude to work in Public Universities in Rivers State.
3. determine the extent to which empathy relates to lecturers' attitudes to work in Public Universities in Rivers State.

The following research questions were studied;

1. What is the relationship between self-awareness and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public Universities in Rivers State?

2. What is the relationship between self-regulation and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public Universities in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between empathy and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public Universities in Rivers state?

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance;

1. There is no significant relationship between self-awareness and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers state.
2. There is no significant relationship between self-regulation and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers state.
3. There is no significant relationship between empathy and the mean response of lecturer attitude towards work in public Universities in Rivers state.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlation research design, questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents on the studied variables. A sample size of 590 consisting of 296 academic staff for the University of Port Harcourt, 197 for Rivers State University and 97 for Ignatius Ajuru University of Education was selected for the study using a proportionate simple random sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire titled: “Emotional Intelligence Lecturers’ Work Attitude Questionnaire” (EILWAQ) will be used for the study. The items are scored on a four – point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). The reliability index of 0.795 was gotten for Self-Awareness, 0.832 for Self-Regulation, and 0.865 for Empathy using the Cronbach’s alpha model. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used to answer the research questions and test hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the relationship between self-awareness and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between self-awareness and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 1: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation of Self-Awareness and the Mean response of Lecturer Attitude towards Work in public universities in Rivers State

		Mean Response on Lecturers Attitude towards Work	Self-Awareness
Mean Response of Lecturer’s Attitude towards Work	Pearson’s Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	1	0.476** .000
	N	590	590

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

correlation interpretation .0-.19 very weak, .2-.39 weak, .4-.59 moderate, .6-.79 strong, .8-1.0 very strong

Table 1 shows the result of a Pearson product-moment correlation that was run to determine if there was a relationship between self-awareness and the mean response of the lecturer’s attitude towards work and to ascertain the significance of the relationship. The result was ($r = .476$, $n = 590$, $p <$

0.05) this result shows that there was a moderate positive correlation between self-awareness and the mean response of the lecturer's attitude towards work, the result is statistically significant as the p-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is Rejected.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between self-regulation and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between self-regulation and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Self-regulation and the Mean response of Lecturer Attitude towards Work in Public Universities in Rivers State

		Mean Response on Lecturers Attitude towards Work	Self-Regulation
Mean Response of Lecturer's Attitude towards Work	Pearson's Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	1	0.442** .000
	N	590	590

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

correlation interpretation .0-.19 very weak, .2-.39 weak, .4-.59 moderate, .6-.79 strong. .8-1.0 very strong

Table 2 shows the result of a Pearson product-moment correlation that was run to determine if there was a relationship between self-regulation and the mean response of the lecturer's attitude towards work and to ascertain the significance of the relationship. The result was ($r .442, n = 590, p < 0.05$) this result shows that there was a moderate positive correlation between self-regulation and the mean response of the lecturer's attitude to work, the result is statistically significant as the p-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between empathy and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between empathy and the mean response of lecturer attitude to work in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 3: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Empathy and the Mean response of Lecturer Attitude towards Work in public universities in Rivers State

		Mean Response on Lecturers Attitude towards Work	Empathy
Mean Response of Lecturer's Attitude towards Work	Pearson's Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	1	0.591** .000
	N	590	590

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

correlation interpretation .0-.19 very weak, .2-.39 weak, .4-.59 moderate, .6-.79 strong. .8-1.0 very strong

Table 3 shows the result of a Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine if there was a relationship between empathy and the mean response of the lecturer's attitude towards work and to ascertain the significance of the relationship. The result was ($r = .591$, $n = 590$, $p < 0.05$), this result shows that there was a moderate positive correlation between empathy and the mean response of the lecturer's attitude to work, the result is statistically significant as the p-value of .000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result on shows a moderately significant relationship between self-awareness and lecturers attitude to work. This result agrees with those of Karimah and Mujanah (2021) in their study of the effect of self-awareness, organizational culture and competence on the performance of the employees of the Culture and Tourism Office of East Java Province. Organizational culture, competence and self-awareness simultaneously have a significant effect on employee performance and Lontoh, (2021) examined the relationship between self- awareness and a sense of belonging in the professionalism of teachers. He found self-awareness to have an adequate effect on employees' work performance and to correlate with work professionalism respectively. This finding is also consistent with that of Mohd Aznan, et. al, (2019) who examined a study on the relationship between self-awareness and job satisfaction. The result showed that self-awareness was significantly related to job satisfaction. This result could be because a worker who has a high level of self-awareness will be conscious of himself and what is expected of him and will tend to have a positive attitude towards work.

The finding revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-regulation and lecturers' attitude to work in Rivers' state universities. The outcome of the result of research question two corroborates that of Kovács and Kálmán (2022) investigated a study on the role of self-regulation and perceived self- efficacy in adaptation to home-office work during the pandemic and found a strong indicator of work efficacy to be self-regulation. The present finding is also supported by Zannä et. al, (2021) who found all the dimensions of Emotional intelligence including self-regulation to be a strong predictor of job performance. The Investigation which was carried out on the employees of a division of the Hungarian subsidiary of a chemical and consumer goods multinational was to gain a deeper understanding of perceived self-efficacy and self-regulation during the learning processes that the participants experienced under the new circumstances. This could be a result of the fact that workers who can regulate their emotions and behaviours could easily possess good attributes and be good team players in the workplace.

Furthermore, the study affirmed that there exists a significant relationship between empathy and lecturers' attitude to work in River's state universities. This result aligns with that of Raime et. al (2022) who conducted a study to examine the relationship between perceived leaders' empathy, recognition, money compensation and employees' happiness among the academicians from all private universities in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. The study which found empathy to be the main source of motivation among employees recommends that leaders be empathetic and understanding toward their employees since this value will foster a sense of belonging among employees while creating employment sustainability which has proven to help many organizations to be more successful.

A similar conclusion was reached by Obimakinde et. al (2021) whose studies found a positive and significant relationship between empathy and attitude to work who carried out a study on empathy and its correlates among medical doctors working in the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Nigeria. The study concluded that medical doctors possessed varying levels of empathy relative to their sociodemographic characteristics, speciality of choice and level of expertise. Exposure to teachings on empathy and work-related challenges underscores empathic skills. The positive relationship between empathy and attitude to work shows that empathetic workers who can

relate to the feelings of their colleagues and co-workers will transfer these attributes to their work environment and how they carry out their responsibilities, therefore enhancing their job performance. This, therefore, answers the research question three posed for this study and therefore validates the findings that there is a significant relationship between empathy and lecturers' attitude to work.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy influenced the work attitude of lecturers at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State University, and University of Port Harcourt. Therefore, it is essential that these elements be taken into account in order to moderate their negative work attitudes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study have revealed the following was recommended:

1. Universities should try to develop organisational work environments that promote emotional intelligence, thereby boosting the attitude to work of their staff.
2. Workshops and symposiums aimed at raising awareness regarding the constructs investigated in this study and how to foster greater emotional intelligence should be considered.
3. Heads of Department should also consider seeking alternative ways to create a good work environment both physically and otherwise to improve the emotional state of the staff in the Department thereby improving their attitude to work.

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