
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS CORRELATE OF STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DUTSIN-MA METROPOLIS, KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated emotional intelligence as a correlate of students' engagement and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma metropolis, Katsina state. 3 objectives and 3 hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted a correlational survey design. The population consisted of 5,017 senior secondary school students across four public schools in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis while the target population consisted of SS1-3 students. The study used a sample of 125 respondent. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with reliability coefficient of 0.80, 0.83 and 0.85 for emotional intelligence, students engagement and students academic performance respectively. Data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and student engagement ($r = .534$), as well as between emotional intelligence and academic performance ($r = .481$). Emotional intelligence and student engagement jointly accounted for 37.5% of the total variance in academic performance. The study concluded that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of both engagement and academic outcomes. Based on these findings, it was recommended that Secondary school management should incorporate emotional intelligence development into teaching and learning processes through structured activities such as life skills education and reflective exercises.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Student Engagement, Academic Performance

Introduction

Secondary education is a critical stage in adolescents' development, characterized by significant cognitive, emotional, and social changes that influence learning and self-perception. Contemporary research emphasizes that academic performance is not solely dependent on cognitive ability but is also shaped by non-cognitive factors such as emotional intelligence (EI) and student engagement (Parker et al., 2016). Emotional intelligence, defined as the capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate one's own emotions as well as those of others, plays a significant role in students' academic success (Alabbasi et al., 2023). Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a pivotal role in shaping students' capacity to regulate their emotions, build resilience, sustain motivation, and maintain effective interpersonal relationships. These competencies collectively enable students to cope more effectively with academic stress and remain actively involved in the learning process.

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to achieve superior academic outcomes, display more positive classroom behavior, and exhibit stronger motivation and persistence across diverse cultural settings (Petrides et al., 2018;

Adeyemo & Adeleye, 2020; Thomas & Vira, 2021).

Closely linked to emotional intelligence is student engagement, a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive participation in learning activities. Engaged students are more attentive, actively involved in classroom interactions, and committed to completing academic tasks (Fredricks et al., 2004). Research has established that higher levels of engagement significantly contribute to improved academic performance, stronger school connectedness, and enhanced resilience (Wang & Fredricks, 2017; Oluwatimilehin & Adediwura, 2021). Notably, emotional intelligence facilitates this engagement by fostering emotional awareness and social competence, thereby strengthening students' ability to interact effectively within the learning environment (Reyes et al., 2015).

Academic performance, typically assessed through grades and standardized evaluations, represents the ultimate outcome of the learning process. However, an exclusive focus on cognitive achievement fails to capture the critical influence of emotional and psychological factors. Emotional intelligence not only enhances students' ability to manage stress but also promotes sustained engagement, which in turn leads to more consistent academic performance and improved overall well-being (Brackett et al., 2011; Yusuf et al., 2018). Thus, emotional intelligence, student engagement, and academic performance are intricately interconnected, with emotional intelligence serving as a foundational factor that drives engagement and, ultimately, academic success.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), many regions in Nigeria, including areas such as Dutsin-Ma Metropolis in Katsina State, experience socio-educational challenges characterized by limited access to educational resources. Similarly, the UNICEF (2021) highlights the inadequacy of psychosocial support systems available to students, which can hinder their academic development and well-being. In the same vein, the Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria (2019) emphasizes the need for supportive learning environments to enhance students' overall academic success. Consequently, these conditions underscore the importance of emotional intelligence as a critical factor in helping students cope with such challenges and achieve improved academic outcomes. Despite its recognized importance, existing evidence suggests that research on the combined relationship between emotional intelligence, student engagement, and academic performance remains relatively limited in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions. According to the Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria (2019), much of the educational research and intervention focus in Nigeria has historically emphasized access, infrastructure, and cognitive achievement, with comparatively less attention given to psychosocial variables such as emotional intelligence and student engagement. Similarly, reports by the Universal Basic Education Commission (2020) indicate regional disparities in educational research and data availability, with northern states being underrepresented in empirical educational studies.

Furthermore, the UNICEF (2021) highlights that research and interventions in northern Nigeria are often concentrated on basic education access and security challenges, leaving gaps in studies that examine psychological and engagement-related factors influencing academic performance at the secondary school level. These gaps collectively support the claim that more context-specific empirical research is needed to understand how emotional intelligence and student engagement interact to influence academic outcomes among secondary school students in northern Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigates emotional intelligence as a correlate of student engagement and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma. It aims to provide insights that support the integration of emotional learning into educational practices and policies for improved

academic outcomes

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance in secondary schools is influenced not only by cognitive ability but also by emotional, social, and behavioral factors. However, a growing body of evidence indicates that many students in Nigerian secondary schools, including those in areas such as Dutsin-Ma Metropolis, exhibit low levels of engagement, which manifest in poor classroom participation, absenteeism, low motivation, and declining academic performance. According to the Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria (2019), challenges within the secondary education system such as insufficient infrastructure and limited instructional resources contribute to reduced student involvement in learning activities. Similarly, the Universal Basic Education Commission (2020) reports that overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teaching facilities in many public schools hinder effective teaching and limit meaningful teacher–student interaction, thereby affecting students’ engagement levels.

Furthermore, the UNICEF (2021) highlights that weak parental involvement and broader socio-economic constraints in many Nigerian communities negatively impact students’ motivation and consistent school attendance. These conditions collectively diminish students’ emotional attachment to school and weaken their commitment to academic tasks. As a result, although student engagement is widely recognized as a critical determinant of academic success, it is often undermined by structural and psychosocial challenges prevalent in the Nigerian secondary school context.

A key contributing factor is the neglect of emotional intelligence (EI), which has been widely recognized as essential for students’ academic and social functioning. According to the UNESCO (2019), many education systems, particularly in developing contexts, tend to prioritize cognitive achievement over socio-emotional learning, thereby overlooking the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing student engagement and performance which plays a vital role in helping students manage emotions, build relationships, and remain engaged academically. Despite its importance, emotional intelligence (EI) is rarely incorporated into teaching practices or school-based support systems, particularly in Northern Nigeria. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), many school systems place greater emphasis on academic instruction than on the development of socio-emotional competencies, resulting in limited classroom integration of emotional intelligence. Similarly, Durlak et al. (2011) found that structured social and emotional learning (SEL) programs which foster emotional intelligence (EI) are not systematically implemented in many educational contexts, especially in developing regions.

Additionally, the researchers students in Senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma face socio-economic and infrastructural challenges that further affect their academic focus and confidence. Coupled with the limited empirical research on the relationship between emotional intelligence, student engagement, and academic performance at the secondary school level, this creates a significant research gap. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how emotional intelligence relates to student engagement and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis, with the aim of improving educational outcomes through more holistic strategies.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, student engagement, and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis, Katsina State.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and student engagement among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.
2. Examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.
3. Assess the combined influence of emotional intelligence and student engagement on academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated to be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

HO1: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and student engagement among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

HO2: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

HO3: There is no significant combined influence of emotional intelligence and student engagement on academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational survey design to examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, student engagement, and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis, Katsina State. The population of the study consisted of 5,017 senior secondary school students (SS I–SS III) in public schools, from which a sample of 125 students was selected from the target population using multistage sampling, including purposive, stratified, and simple random techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and academic performance (students term scores). The instrument was validated by experts in educational psychology and measurement and evaluation, and a pilot study confirmed reliability with acceptable Cronbach’s alpha reliability co-efficient of 0.80, 0.83 and 0.85 for emotional intelligence, students engagement and students academic performance respectively. Data collection was conducted with official approval from Dutsinma zonal education quality assurance, ensuring confidentiality, and completed within two weeks during school hours. Data were analyzed using appropriate statistical software, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and student engagement among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

Table 1: r-value of emotional intelligence and student engagement among secondary school students

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Emotional Intelligence	125	52.34	7.82	123	0.534	0.000	Rejected
Student Engagement	125	47.19	6.95				

The result in Table 1 indicates a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and student engagement ($r = .534$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis

(H_{01}) is rejected. This suggests that higher emotional intelligence is associated with greater student engagement.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

Table 2: r-value of emotional intelligence and academic performance among secondary school students

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Emotional Intelligence	125	52.34	7.82	123	0.481	0.001	Rejected
Academic Performance	125	63.27	8.10				

The result in Table 2 shows a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance ($r = .481, p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected. This implies that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to achieve better academic performance.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant combined influence of emotional intelligence and student engagement on academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

Table 3: R- value showing the combined influence of emotional intelligence and student engagement on academic performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.612	0.375	0.365	6.45

The model summary in Table 3.1 reveals that emotional intelligence and student engagement together explain 37.5% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.375$). The R-value of 0.612 indicates a moderately strong multiple correlation between the predictors and academic performance.

Table 4: ANOVA – Emotional Intelligence and Student Engagement on Academic Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)
Regression	1955.28	2	977.64		
Residual	3265.72	122	26.76	23.57	0.000
Total	5221.00	124			

The ANOVA result shows that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(2,122) = 23.57, p < 0.001$), indicating that the combined influence of emotional intelligence and student engagement significantly predicts academic performance.

Table 5: Coefficients – Contribution of Emotional Intelligence and Student Engagement

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Constant	21.324	3.298	—	6.47	0.000
Emotional Intelligence	0.362	0.084	0.389	4.31	0.000
Student Engagement	0.295	0.091	0.334	3.24	0.002

The coefficients table indicates that both emotional intelligence and student engagement made statistically significant contributions to academic performance. Since the p-values are below 0.05 and the overall model is significant, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

This confirms that emotional intelligence and student engagement combined significantly influence academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and student engagement. This supports earlier work by Sánchez-Álvarez, Extremera, and Fernández-Berrocal (2016), who found that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence reported higher levels of school engagement and lower emotional disengagement. Similarly, Reyes et al. (2015) observed that classroom emotional climate and emotionally supportive teacher-student interactions were significantly related to student engagement, especially in emotionally intelligent learners. The current finding reinforces the theoretical assumption that students with enhanced emotional awareness, empathy, and regulation are more likely to be behaviorally and emotionally invested in learning activities. However, contrasting views are offered by Qualter et al. (2015), who noted that while emotional intelligence plays a role in interpersonal behavior, its influence on student engagement may be indirect and context-dependent, especially in classrooms where emotional skills are not explicitly cultivated through pedagogy.

The second major finding showed a statistically significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance. This is consistent with the results of Adeyemo and Adeleye (2020), who found that Nigerian secondary school students with higher emotional intelligence consistently performed better in academic tasks due to improved emotional self-regulation and stress management. Similarly, a meta-analysis by MacCann et al. (2020) confirmed that emotional intelligence significantly predicts academic performance across diverse cultural and educational settings. Their findings indicated that emotionally intelligent students are more likely to set academic goals, maintain focus, and adapt positively to classroom demands. However, contrary evidence is presented by Orben and Przybylski (2019), who argued that psychological traits such as emotional intelligence may have minimal direct impact on academic performance when factors like socioeconomic background, parental involvement, and instructional quality are taken into account. This suggests that while EI is important, its effects may be moderated by broader systemic variables.

The third and final finding revealed that emotional intelligence and student engagement jointly accounted for 37.5% of the variance in academic performance, with both variables contributing significantly to students' academic outcomes. This finding affirms the work of Thomas and Vira (2021), who concluded that students with high emotional intelligence and strong engagement tendencies exhibited higher academic persistence, better grades, and more positive attitudes toward

school. It also aligns with the findings of Abiola and Udofia (2016), who noted that emotional and behavioral competence together serve as reliable predictors of performance among Nigerian adolescents. This suggests that emotional intelligence and engagement function synergistically to enhance learning outcomes. However, this integrative model is challenged by the findings of Orkibi and Ronen (2017), who reported that psychological well-being and performance are more strongly influenced by external supports such as peer relationships and teacher feedback than by internal emotional skills alone. This points to the complexity of the learning process and the need to consider the broader ecological factors surrounding the learner.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence, student engagement, and academic performance among secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma Metropolis, Katsina State. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence is significantly associated with both student engagement and academic achievement. Moreover, the combined influence of emotional intelligence and student engagement accounted for a considerable proportion of the variance in students' academic performance, indicating that non-cognitive factors play a crucial role in determining educational outcomes. The study has demonstrated that students who possess higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to engage actively in classroom activities, regulate their learning behavior, and perform better academically. Emotional skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal competence enable students to adapt to the social and academic demands of school life more effectively. Similarly, student engagement comprising behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions has been shown to mediate the pathway between emotional intelligence and academic success.

Recommendations

Based on the study's core findings on the relationships among emotional intelligence, student engagement, and academic performance, the following recommendations are proposed:

Secondary school management authorities should incorporate emotional intelligence development into teaching and learning processes through structured activities such as life skills education and reflective exercises. This will enhance students' emotional regulation and interpersonal skills, thereby improving their academic performance.

Teachers should adopt student-centered instructional approaches, including collaborative learning and interactive classroom methods, to strengthen students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which are critical for improved academic outcomes.

Secondary school management authorities should provide regular training for teachers on strategies to foster emotional intelligence and student engagement. This will equip teachers with the skills needed to support students' holistic development and enhance their academic success.

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