

Emotional intelligence and staff job performance in federal universities in south-south, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined emotional intelligence and staff job performance in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to evaluate the relationship between motivation and handling diverse learning needs and ascertain the relationship between empathy and providing career guidance in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. Research questions and five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The population comprised four thousand, four hundred and seventy-eight (4,478) staff members, from which a sample size of 354 was determined using Freund and Williams' formula. Two hundred and eighty-seven (287) respondents returned their questionnaires, which were accurately completed. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The Z-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings indicated that motivation had a significant positive relationship with handling diverse learning needs in federal universities in South-South Nigeria, $Z = 10.625$, $p < .05$. Empathy had a significant positive relationship with providing career guidance in federal universities in South-South Nigeria, $Z = 11.171$, $p < .05$. The study concluded that motivation and empathy had significant positive relationships with handling diverse learning needs and providing career guidance to students in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The study recommended, among other things, that federal universities in South-South Nigeria should encourage academic staff to cultivate intrinsic motivation by setting personal teaching goals, engaging in continuous learning, and participating in peer mentoring programmes.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, empathy, providing career guidance, handling diverse learning needs, motivation, staff job performance.

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Introduction

Historically, the development of emotional intelligence (EI) can be understood as a gradual shift from traditional views of intelligence that emphasized cognitive ability towards a broader recognition of emotional and interpersonal capabilities. Recent historical reviews indicate that early ideas related to EI can be traced to concepts of social intelligence, emotional competence, and interpersonal functioning. Krishnan and Awang (2025) explain that the intellectual roots of EI developed from early social-intelligence perspectives and later evolved through the major frameworks of Salovey and Mayer, Goleman, and Bar-On. Similarly, Khan and Khan (2025) traced the development of EI from the early twentieth century through contemporary research, identifying the ability, trait, and mixed models as major stages in its theoretical development.

From a global perspective, emotional intelligence has become an important consideration in understanding teaching effectiveness and academic staff job performance. Recent evidence indicates that emotionally competent teachers are better positioned to establish empathetic and communicative classroom environments, manage interpersonal relationships, regulate workplace emotions, and motivate learners. A 2025 systematic review by Gonzalez-Arauz found that emotional competencies, such as empathy, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and social skills, are associated with stronger teaching performance and improved teaching and learning environments. This suggests that academic staff job performance is not determined solely by intellectual or professional competence but may also depend on how effectively lecturers manage their own emotions and respond to the emotions of others.

In Nigeria, this issue has become increasingly relevant because lecturers operate within complex academic environments characterised by diverse student populations, demanding teaching responsibilities, research expectations, supervision, administrative duties, and interpersonal relationships. Recent Nigerian evidence supports the importance of emotional intelligence in lecturers' job performance. Sifawa and Umar (2024), in a study of academic staff at Shehu Shagari University of Education, found that emotional intelligence training was relevant to improving lecturers' job performance. Similarly, Olobia, Asiyai, and Akporehe (2025), in their study of lecturers in universities in Delta and Edo States, reported a significant influence of emotional intelligence on lecturers' job productivity and emphasised its relevance to interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution.

At the South-South regional level, this relationship is particularly important because universities in the region operate within socially and academically diverse environments. Evidence from Delta and Edo States shows that emotional intelligence is significantly associated with lecturers' job productivity, while research from Cross River State has also reported a relationship between emotional intelligence and educational performance. Eguonor, Peretomode, and Asiyai (2025) specifically examined emotional intelligence and job performance in Delta and Edo States and reported a significant relationship between the two variables. Although this evidence includes secondary school teachers rather than university academic staff, it provides useful regional evidence of the relevance of emotional competencies to educational work performance. Therefore, examining the influence of emotional intelligence on academic staff job performance in federal universities in South-South Nigeria is important for understanding how lecturers' self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills may contribute to effective teaching, research, student supervision, and other academic responsibilities.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, academic staff in federal universities should possess adequate emotional intelligence to effectively manage their emotions, communicate with students and colleagues, resolve interpersonal challenges, and perform their teaching, research, supervision, and administrative responsibilities efficiently.

However, in some federal universities in South-South Nigeria, academic staff may face difficulties in managing workplace emotions, student-related challenges, interpersonal conflicts, work pressure, and competing academic

responsibilities. Such difficulties may affect communication, relationships, cooperation, and the effective discharge of academic duties.

If the problem is not addressed, it may lead to poor lecturer-student relationships, reduced teaching effectiveness, weak collaboration, lower research and academic productivity, ineffective student supervision, and declining quality of academic service delivery. It is therefore necessary to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on academic staff job performance in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the Influence of emotional intelligence on Academic staff job performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. Specifically, this study seek to:

- i. Evaluate the relationship between motivation and handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. Ascertain the relationship between empathy and providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions was raised for the study:

- i. What is the relationship between motivation and handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between empathy and providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

- i. H₀₁: Motivation does not have a significant relationship with handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. H₀₂: Empathy does not have a significant relationship with providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study would be of immense benefits to the government, financial institutions, management consultancy firms, managers public and private enterprises, researchers, and job educators. Government would benefit immensely from the findings of the study during recruitment, selection, placement and promotion of lecturers. It would also open government's eye to the need for training and re-training of employees on emotional intelligence. Managers and leaders of both public and private institutions would benefit from the findings of this study during recruitment, selection, placement and promotion exercises in their organizations. It would also assist them in devising appropriate tools to motivate their employees. Researchers would gain more insight on emotional intelligence and also identify areas for further research on emotional intelligence in this study.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study centered on Emotional Intelligence and academic staff Job Performance in Federal Universities, South-South, Nigeria, namely; University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, University of Calabar, Cross River State, University of Benin, Edo State, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State and Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State. The study was further delimited to three emotional intelligence variables as categorized by Goleman (1998) which are; self-

awareness, self-regulation, and motivation. Unit scope or analysis was limited to human beings only (that is, job educators in the 2023/2024 academic session and their job performance). Contextually, the work is domiciled in Organizational Behaviour (OB), one of the core areas of Business Management.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Framework

Emotion

Emotion as a complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence thought and behaviour. The scholar further stated that emotionality is associated with a range of psychological phenomena and motivation, Cherry (2020), Salovey *et al.* (2017) viewed emotions as motivating forces which are processes that arouse, sustain and direct activity. Goleman (2005) described emotions as guiding forces that help humans in facing predicaments and tasks that one's intelligence alone cannot handle. Conversely, Weiss (2023) stated that emotion is not a single thing, but must be considered as a response or responses produced by unified physiological, subjective and behavioural components.

Intelligence

Intelligence as a fundamental faculty, the alteration which is of the utmost importance for practical life. This faculty is judgment, otherwise called good sense, practical sense, initiative and the faculty of adapting oneself to circumstances, Obetta (2022). Sternberg (2020) viewed intelligence as when a person has learned or can learn to adjust himself to his environment. Drever (2021) opined that intelligence is said to be present where the individual animal or human being is aware, however, dimly of the relevance of his behaviour to an objective.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence, according to Salovey and Mayer (2017) is the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth. However, after pursuing further research, their definition of EI evolved into the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions, to enhance thinking. It includes the ability to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Salovey and Mayer, 2017). The scholars who are proponents of the ability-based theory viewed emotions as useful sources of information that help one to make sense of and navigate the social environment. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, control and evaluate emotions (Cherry, 2020a). Some researchers suggest that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened, while others claim it as an inborn characteristic. The ability to express and control emotions is essential, but so is the ability to understand, interpret and respond to the emotions of others

Components of Emotional Intelligence used in the study

Motivation

Motivation when considered as a component of emotional intelligence refers to intrinsic motivation. Employees who are emotionally intelligent are motivated by things beyond external rewards like fame, money, recognition and acclaim. Instead, they have a passion to fulfill their own inner needs and goals. They seek internal rewards and flows from being totally in tune with an activity, and pursue peak experience (Cherry, 2020a). Cherry (2020a) further stressed that those who are competent in this area tend to be action-oriented. They set goals, have high need for achievement, and are always looking for ways to do better. They also tend to be very committed and are good at taking initiative.

Empathy

Empathy or the ability to understand how others are feeling is absolutely critical to emotional intelligence, but it involves more than just being able to recognize the emotional states of others (Cherry, 2020). Cherry stressed that, empathy also involves one's responses to people based on information. Cherry further stressed that: being empathetic also allows you to understand the power dynamics that often influence social relationships, especially in workplace settings. Those competent in this area are able to sense who possesses power in different relationships, understand how these forces influence feelings and behaviours, and accurately interpret different situations that hinge on such power dynamics.

Staff Job Performance

Staff job performance refers to the extent to which lecturers effectively and efficiently accomplish the duties and responsibilities assigned to them by their tertiary institutions. These responsibilities generally include effective teaching, research and publication, student supervision, academic administration, community service, and participation in institutional activities. Thus, academic staff job performance reflects the quality, quantity, timeliness, and effectiveness of lecturers' contributions toward achieving the objectives of their universities or other tertiary institutions. Recent Nigerian studies have assessed academic staff performance through indicators such as teaching effectiveness, research activities, student engagement, punctuality, academic service, and productivity. Odediji (2024) examined academic staff job performance in relation to ICT facilities and reported performance indicators including punctuality, student engagement, mastery of subject matter, and participation in academic activities. Similarly, Goga, Idris and Isah (2025) discussed academic staff performance in terms of teaching, research, and community service, while Onah, Obioji and Olorunfemi (2025) treated job performance as an important outcome of academic staff effectiveness in tertiary institutions.

Handling Diverse Learning Needs

Handling diverse learning needs refers to the ability of academic staff to identify, understand, and respond appropriately to differences in students' abilities, learning preferences, backgrounds, and educational requirements. In federal universities in South-South Nigeria, this involves using flexible teaching methods, accessible learning materials, appropriate assessment approaches, and inclusive technologies to ensure that students with different learning needs can participate effectively in academic activities. Raimi et al. (2024), in a study of clinical students at Niger Delta University, found that students demonstrated different learning preferences, with auditory and kinesthetic modalities being prominent. The authors therefore emphasized the importance of using varied instructional approaches rather than relying on a single teaching method. Similarly, Atah et al. (2025) examined lecturers' attitudes and readiness toward teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Nigerian higher institutions and highlighted the importance of lecturer preparedness for inclusive teaching. The study involved 270 lecturers from four federal universities in South-East Nigeria, providing relevant evidence that staff training and readiness are important for responding to diverse learning requirements.

Providing career guidance

A student's career path starts early with his experiences and influences at home and ends with him working his dream job. Or at least, that's what most college students want to achieve when they enroll in their selected program (Fishman, 2015). Most of these students already have an end in mind. However, having a goal is different from actually knowing what steps to take to achieve it. Unfortunately, most of these students do not have a clear plan ahead of them. Some enter college thinking that taking up a major of their choice and earning a degree will automatically land them a lucrative job. Career guidance is a process that helps individuals make informed decisions about their career paths, involves assessing skills, interests, and values, and providing information and advice to match them with suitable careers. The overall aim of career guidance is to develop the capacity of individuals to

manage their careers, which involves a range of learning activities that help people access services, resources, and experiences related to employment and further education and training. It is useful at any stage of life, but is particularly useful for young people making career choices or just entering the job market. It can also be provided by various professionals, including career counselors, educators, and mentors. Career guidance in higher education institutions offer comprehensive career guidance to students, encompassing self-assessment, exploration of career options, and preparation for the job market, potentially through workshops, mentorship programs, and career counseling services.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Ability theory of EI by Peter Salovey, 1990

Ability Theory of EI - Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990)

Salovey and Mayer (1990) developed a theory which they described as ability theory of EI. The theorists originally conceptualized EI as encompassing three types of mental processes; appraisal and expression of emotions and the utilization of emotions. However, Salovey and Mayer's research over several years has allowed them to modify and re-define their conceptualization or categorization of EI. The theorists currently posit or assert that, EI includes four types of abilities:

- a. perceiving emotions: the ability to detect and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices and cultural artifacts including the ability to identify one's own emotions. Perceiving emotions represent a basic aspect of emotional intelligence as it makes all other processing of emotional information possible.
- b. using emotions: the ability to harness emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem-solving. The emotionally intelligent person can capitalize fully upon his or her changing moods in order to best fit the task at hand.
- c. understanding emotions: the ability to comprehend emotion language and to appreciate complicated relationships among emotions. For example, understanding emotions encompasses the ability to be sensitive to slight variations between emotions, and the ability to recognize and describe how emotions evolve over time.
- d. managing emotions: the ability to regulate emotions in both ourselves and in others. Therefore, the emotionally intelligent person can harness emotions, even negative ones and manage them to achieve intended goals.

The ability-based theory views emotions as useful sources of information that help one to make sense of and navigate the social environment. The theory proposes that individuals vary in their ability to process information of an emotional nature and in their ability to relate emotional processing to a wider cognition. This ability is seen to manifest itself in certain adaptive behaviours. The relevance of this theory to the present study is that, job educators who have high EI skills would be able to identify, detect and decipher their emotions, that of their colleagues and students, express emotions accurately and also manage their emotions appropriately. This ability would in no small measure lead to their improved job performance.

Empirical Review

Motivation and Handling Diverse Learning Needs

Soltanzadehet *al.* (2023) examine the effect of active learning on academic achievement motivation in high schools. Participants included 1013 students that studied in Karaj high schools. There were 561 boys and 462 girls and their ages ranged from 15-18 years-old. To data collection, all subjects filled in the Achievement Motive Scale Test (AMST) and demographic questionnaire. Also, the collected data was analyzed by inferential statistical tests such as an independent t test at the $P < 0.05$ significant level. Results showed that the differences between two groups were significant at the level of $P < 0.05$ and active learning group obtained higher scores than traditional group in

achievement motivation. Based on our results, the use of active learning method in classroom is vital to have appositive impact on the quality of the students learning process and achievement motivation.

Raysharieet *al.* (2023) investigated how intrinsic motivation affects students' performance in the Management degree at FEB Palangka Raya University. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose 123 students from the class of 2022 to participate in a survey. Participants' desire to learn was rated on a scale of 1–100 using the questionnaire, and their first-semester academic performance was evaluated using their individual version (IP) grade point average. EViews 12 was used to do the statistical analysis of the data. Students' grades (Y) were shown to be highly impacted by their level of learning motivation (X). The results of the statistical analysis, conducted using EViews 12, showed that there is a strong correlation between students' level of intrinsic motivation and their academic performance. Specifically, this study found that students who have higher levels of intrinsic motivation tend to have better academic performance than those who have lower levels of intrinsic motivation.

Davidovitch and Dorot (2023) identified if and to what extent differences in motivation exist between high school students, for whom school is mandatory, and undergraduate students in tertiary institutions, who make inactive choice to study in an academic institution. This study also explores whether and to what extent motivation affects the achievements of these two groups of learners, and whether motivation is related to their personal, family, and socio-economic background and gender. To examine these questions, 121 participants responded to a22-item questionnaire on motivation for learning. Findings show that undergraduate students are more highly motivated for learning compared to high school students. Associations were found between learners' personal and academic background and their motivation: Motivation increases with age and as grade average increases. Significant difference was, however, found in motivation levels between learners with average socio-economic status and learners with above-average socio-economic status. No gender effects in learners' motivation were found. Findings of the study shed light on the significant of motivation in high school, which is a significant period in youngsters' lives. High school is a scholastic space that also has the potential to strengthen motivation for learning in the future, in academic studies, as both education systems – high school and academic education –affect each other.

Kumari and Kumar (2023) examined the factors influencing teachers' motivation and evaluate the influence of motivation on teachers' job performance in private schools in Mirpurkhas, Pakistan. The study used quantitative statistics and a partial least-squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM analysis) design; the data was collected through a survey questionnaire. We found that motivation significantly influences teachers' job performance. The study revealed that self-determined and non-self-determined motivation and factors influencing teachers' motivation significantly impact teachers' job performance. The administration must formulate teachers' motivational policies and practices to meet their needs. Furthermore, school administrations should provide adequate resources like bonuses, rewards, good communication, moral support, emotional support, and an increment in salaries to ensure quality learning and yield high performance from their teaching staff to improve the relevant education system.

Ayichie and Butler (2023) examined how students at a culturally diverse independent elementary school in the West Coast of Canada participated in classroom context that integrated CRT and SRL-promoting practices. Specifically, this study examined culturally diverse learners' engagement and motivation during a complex learning task. Data collected included classroom observations, practice records and documents, students' work samples, and student interviews and student surveys. The results demonstrated: (1) above medium levels of engagement and motivation, among participants, that varied across specific contexts; and (2) associations between culturally diverse learners' engagement and motivation; and complex learning context such as CRT and SRL-promoting practices. Implications for future research on culturally diverse students' engagement as well as designing a complex task that integrated a culturally responsive teaching and self-regulated learning pedagogical practices to support engagement and motivation are discussed.

Empathy and Career Guidance

Bernil (2024) analyzed the relationship between social support and academic engagement as mediated by empathy. It utilized a non-experimental descriptive correlation design and used survey questionnaires to gather data from STEM SHS students in Davao City, all of whom were selected through convenience sampling. Analysis of results revealed that the learners had moderate to high levels of empathy, a high level of support from friends, and a generally high level of academic engagement. Results also revealed a positive correlation between social support and academic engagement, friend's support and empathy, and empathy and academic engagement. Upon closer examination, there was no sufficient evidence to support the idea of empathy as a mediating factor between social support and academic engagement. However, it is important to highlight the positive correlations between the variables, thus underlining the value of fostering a learning environment anchored on empathy, support, and engagement. Thus, it is highly suggested that academic institutions design curricula and pedagogy deeply rooted in these aspects.

Nooret *al.* (2024) investigated the correlation between a teacher's empathy and a student's self-compassion. It also aimed to enhance empathy in teachers through a pre-stage intervention. The study involved 200 students and 30 teachers, and questionnaires were translated into Urdu for data collection. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis, employing Pearson correlation analysis to assess the relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion. Regression analysis was conducted to explore the predictive nature of teacher empathy on student self-compassion. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare pretest and posttest scores. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion, supporting the hypothesis that empathetic behavior by teachers predicts students' self-compassion. The pre-stage intervention effectively increased empathy in teachers, as reflected by a significant change in scores between the pretest and posttest. These findings highlight the crucial role of teacher empathy in fostering student self-compassion and contribute to the existing literature on the teacher-student relationship, emphasizing the importance of empathy in promoting self-compassion among students.

Sarweret *al.* (2024) investigated the influence of teacher empathy and motivation on student academic achievement, with a focus on the mediating role of students' sense of school belongingness in secondary schools in Punjab, Pakistan. The research employs a survey methodology, gathering data from 778 secondary school teachers to explore how these teacher traits directly impact student outcomes and how the school environment potentially mediates such effects. Results from structural model analysis using Smart-PLS4 indicate that teacher empathy and motivation directly enhance student academic achievement. However, when mediated by the sense of school belongingness, the effects, while still positive, appear less potent. As a result, direct teacher-student interactions have a greater impact on student outcomes than broader educational environments. In addition to pointing out the important role of teacher behaviors in educational success, these findings suggest that enhancing teacher empathy and motivation may be more effective than improving school environments alone. Study implications extend beyond the immediate educational setting, offering insights into effective strategies for teacher development and student engagement.

Coles-Black (2024) examined the importance of teacher awareness of the sub constructs of empathy and how this influences their relationships with students. Investigating the impact of the sub constructs of empathy as outlined by Decety and Jackson (2016) and their correlation to the sub constructs of teacher-student relationships (Pianta, 1992), the study demonstrated important findings for cultivating positive teacher-student relationships. The study revealed that there is a correlational relationship between the sub constructs of teacher-student relationships—closeness and conflict—and empathy and its sub constructs. The qualitative information revealed that an awareness of empathy encourages teachers to engage students with kindness and respect; therefore, strengthening their

relationships. These correlational findings add to the literature for pre-service and in-service teachers and target specific skills to enhance professional development and education.

Gap in Knowledge

As emotional intelligence has been linked to positive outcomes in students' behavior and academic performance, its role in enhancing academic staff communication with students and their overall job performance remains underexplored. Studies like those by Saeedi *et al.* (2024) and Suman *et al.* (2023) have examined the effects of social skills and empathy on student-teacher relationships, but these findings have not been extended to how educators can use these skills to enhance their professional effectiveness in a university setting. In South-South Nigeria, where the educational landscape is unique and challenging, understanding the role of educators' EI in handling classroom dynamics, improving student engagement, and facilitating career development can significantly improve the overall educational experience. This lack of research into the application of EI within Nigerian higher education settings limits the practical strategies that can be employed to enhance academic staff teaching practices and their interactions with students, ultimately impacting the quality of education.

Methodology

The area of the study comprised of five (5) Federal Universities in South South, Nigeria namely - University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State; University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State; University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State; University of Benin, Edo State; and Federal University Otuoke, Balyelsa State. The study used the descriptive survey design approach. The primary source of data was the administration of questionnaire. A total population of the study (4478) consists of the Academic staff of Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria. The adequate sample size of three hundred and fifty-four (354) using Freund and William's statistic formula at 5 percent margin of error. Two hundred and eighty-four (284) staff returned the questionnaire and accurately filled. That gave 80 percent response rate. The validity of the instrument was tested using content analysis and the result was good. The reliability was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). It gave a reliability co-efficient of 0.760 which was also good. Data was presented and analyzed by mean score and standard deviation using Sprint Likert Scale. The hypotheses were analyzed using Z – test statistic tool.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data presentation

The influence of motivation on handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 1: Responses on the influence of motivation on handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

		5	4	3	2	1	ΣFX	-	SD	Decision
		SA	A	N	DA	SD		X		
1	Motivation plays a crucial role in addressing diverse learning needs in universities, influencing students' engagement, and overall academic success.	495 99 34.5	184 46 16.0	252 84 29.3	40 20 7.0	38 38 13.2	1009 287 100%	3.52	1.371	Agree
2	Universities that prioritize motivation through scholarships, recognition programs, and academic support services see higher retention	900 180 62.7	184 46 16.0	60 20 7.0	34 17 5.9	24 24 8.4	1202 287 100%	4.19	1.287	Agree

3	Universities that boost motivation	665	184	204	34	23	1110	3.87	1.283	Agree
	offer personalized learning pathways	133	46	68	17	23	287			
	that cater to individual interests and abilities.	46.3	16.0	23.7	5.9	8.0	100%			
4	When students feel motivated, they	590	352	60	20	51	1073	3.74	1.469	Agree
	are more likely to attend classes,	118	88	20	10	51	287			
	complete assignments, and perform well in exams.	41.1	30.7	7.0	3.5	17.8	100%			
5	By fostering an environment that	815	216	36	18	49	1049	3.95	1.509	Agree
	supports both intrinsic and extrinsic	163	54	12	9	49	287			
	motivation, universities ensure that all students, regardless of background or learning style, have the opportunity to succeed.	56.8	18.8	4.2	3.1	17.1	100%			
Total Grand mean and standard deviation								3.854	1.3838	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1, 145 respondents out of 287 representing 50.5 percent agreed that Motivation plays a crucial role in addressing diverse learning needs in universities, influencing students' engagement, and overall academic success with mean score 3.52 and standard deviation of 1.371. Universities that prioritize motivation through scholarships, recognition programs, and academic support services see higher retention 226 respondents representing 78.7 percent agreed with mean score of 4.19 and standard deviation of 1.287. Universities that boost motivation offer personalized learning pathways that cater to individual interests and abilities 179 respondents representing 62.3 percent agreed with mean score of 3.87 and standard deviation of 1.283. When students feel motivated, they are more likely to attend classes, complete assignments, and perform well in exams 206 respondents representing 71.8 percent agreed with mean score of 3.74 and 1.469. By fostering an environment that supports both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, universities ensure that all students, regardless of background or learning style, have the opportunity to succeed 217 respondents representing 75.6 percent agreed with a mean score of 3.95 and standard deviation 1.509

The influence of empathy on providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2: Responses on the influence of empathy on providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

		5	4	3	2	1	ΣFX	-	SD	Decision
		SA	A	N	DA	SD		X		
1	Empathetic career advisors take time to understand each student's aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, and personal circumstances.	435	384	36	86	49	990	3.45	1.478	Agree
		87	96	12	43	49	287			
		30.3	33.4	4.2	15.0	17.1	100%			
2	When students feel understood, they are more likely to open up about their fears, uncertainties, and challenges.	560	584	36	12	11	1203	4.19	.909	Agree
		112	146	12	6	11	287			
		39.0	50.9	4.2	2.1	3.8	100%			
3	An empathetic advisor creates a safe space for students to discuss	635	536	21	28	5	1225	4.27	.866	Agree
		127	134	7	14	5	287			

	career concerns without fear of judgment.	44.3	46.7	2.4	4.9	1.7	100%		
4	By understanding students' aspirations deeply, empathetic guidance helps them choose careers that align with their skills and passions, leading to long-term satisfaction and success.	340	648	21	86	7	1102		Agree
		68	162	7	43	7	287	3.84	1.029
		23.7	56.4	2.4	15.0	2.4	100%		
5	Advisors who practice empathy guide students to make choices that resonate with their values and long-term happiness.	555	400	36	20	54	1065		Agree
		111	100	12	10	54	287	3.71	1.478
		38.7	34.8	4.2	3.5	18.8	100%		
Total Grand mean and standard deviation								3.892	1.152

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2, 183 respondents out of 287 representing 63.7 percent agreed that Empathetic career advisors take time to understand each student's aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, and personal circumstances with mean score 3.45 and standard deviation of 1.478. When students feel understood, they are more likely to open up about their fears, uncertainties, and challenges 258 respondents representing 86.9 percent agreed with mean score of 4.19 and standard deviation of .909. An empathetic advisor creates a safe space for students to discuss career concerns without fear of judgment 261 respondents representing 91.0 percent agreed with mean score of 4.27 and standard deviation of .866. By understanding students' aspirations deeply, empathetic guidance helps them choose careers that align with their skills and passions, leading to long-term satisfaction and success 230 respondents representing 80.1 percent agreed with mean score of 3.84 and 1.029. Advisors who practice empathy guide students to make choices that resonate with their values and long-term happiness 211 respondents representing 73.5 percent agreed with a mean score of 3.71 and standard deviation 1.478

Test of Hypotheses

Test of Hypotheses Three: Motivation does not have a significant influence on handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Motivation plays a crucial role in addressing diverse learning needs in universities, influencing students' engagement, and overall academic success.	Universities that prioritize motivation through scholarships, recognition programs, and academic support services see higher retention	Universities that boost motivation offer personalized learning pathways that cater to individual interests and abilities.	When students feel motivated, they are more likely to attend classes, complete assignments, and perform well in exams.	By fostering an environment that supports both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, universities ensure that all students, regardless of background or learning style, have the opportunity to succeed.
N	287	287	287	287	287
Uniform Parameters ^{a,b}	Minimum	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	5	5	5	5
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.345	.627	.463	.468
	Positive	.132	.084	.080	.178
	Negative	-.345	-.627	-.463	-.468
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	5.844	10.625	7.851	7.925	9.622
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. Test distribution is Uniform.

b. Calculated from data.

Decision Rule

If the calculated Z-value is greater than the critical Z-value (i.e. $Z_{cal} > Z_{critical}$), reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis accordingly.

Result

With Kolmogorov-Smirnon Z – value ranges from $5.844 < 10.625$ and on Asymp. Significance of 0.000, the responses from the respondents as displayed in the table was normally distributed. This affirmed the assertion of most of the respondents that Motivation had a significant positive influence on handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Decision

Furthermore, comparing the calculated Z- value ranges $5.844 < 10.625$ against the critical Z- value of .000(2-tailed test at 95percent level of confidence) the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was

accepted which states that Motivation had a significant positive influence on handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria

Test of Hypotheses Four: Empathy does not have a significant influence on providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Empathetic career advisors take time to understand each student's aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, and personal circumstances	When students feel understood , they are more likely to open up about their fears, uncertainties, and challenges.	An empathetic advisor creates a safe space for students to discuss career concerns without fear of judgment.	By understanding students' aspirations deeply, empathetic guidance helps them choose careers that align with their skills and passions, leading to long-term satisfaction and success.	Advisors who practice empathy guide students to make choices that resonate with their values and long-term happiness.
N		287	287	287	287	287
Uniform Parameters ^{a,b}	Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	5	5	5	5	5
	Absolute	.388	.649	.659	.551	.485
Most Extreme Differences	Positive	.171	.038	.017	.024	.188
	Negative	-.388	-.649	-.659	-.551	-.485
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		6.567	10.994	11.171	9.341	8.220
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. Test distribution is Uniform.

b. Calculated from data.

Decision Rule

If the calculated Z-value is greater than the critical Z-value (i.e. $Z_{cal} > Z_{critical}$), reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis accordingly.

Result

With Kolmogorov-Smirnon Z – value ranges from $6.567 < 11.171$ and on Asymp. Significance of 0.000, the responses from the respondents as displayed in the table was normally distributed. This affirmed the assertion of most of the respondents that Empathy had a significant positive influence on providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Decision

Furthermore, comparing the calculated Z- value ranges $6.567 < 11.171$ against the critical Z- value of .000(2-tailed test at 95percent level of confidence) the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was accepted which states that Empathy had a significant positive influence on providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Motivation has a significant influence on handling diverse learning needs

From the result of hypotheses three, the calculated Z- value ranges $5.844 < 10.625$ against the critical Z- value of .000 which implies that Motivation had a significant positive influence on handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. In support of the result in the literature review, slam *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of learning motivation after the intervention of constructive feedback on students' academic achievement. Overall learning motivation through constructive feedback was found a significant impact on students' academic achievement. Students' task-value was found as the best predictor of students' academic achievement, whereas the students' self-efficacy and students' self-regulation also showed significant impact on students' academic achievement in Chemistry subject. Khan and

Empathy has a significant influence on providing career guidance

From the result of hypotheses four, the calculated Z- value ranges $6.567 < 11.171$ against the critical Z- value of .000 which implies that Empathy had a significant positive influence on providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. In support of the result in the literature review, Grigopoulos (2019) examined the impact of teaching empathy on student achievement, academically, socially, and emotionally. Results demonstrated that educators were knowledgeable of the meaning of empathy and its significance on building collaborative communities within the classroom and the school environment leading to socio-emotional competence, capacities, and skills. Depowet *al.* (2021) examined perceptions of empathy in the everyday lives of a group of 246 U.S. adults who were quota sampled to represent the population on key demographics. Although trait empathy was negatively associated only with well-being, empathy in daily life was generally associated with increased well-being. Theoretically distinct components of empathy emotion sharing, perspective taking, and compassion typically co-occur in everyday empathy experiences. Finally, empathy in everyday life was higher for women and the religious but not significantly lower for conservatives and the wealthy.,

Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

- i. Motivation had significant positive influence on handling diverse learning needs in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria $Z(10.625, P. < .05)$. This implies that highly motivated academic staff are more committed, creative, and proactive in addressing the different learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds of students. Their inner drive helps them adapt their teaching methods to support all learners effectively.
- ii. Empathy had significant positive influence on providing career guidance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria, $Z(11.171, P. < .05)$. This implies that academic staff who can understand and relate to students' feelings, challenges, and aspirations are better able to offer personalized and meaningful career advice, helping students make informed decisions about their future paths.

Conclusion

The study concluded that, Motivation and Empathy had significant positive influence on handling diverse learning needs and providing career guidance, with students in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. The study on the Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Academic Staff Job Performance in Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria explores how the ability of academic staff to recognize, understands, and manage their emotions and those of others affects their work performance. Emotional intelligence (EI) components such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills play a vital role in how lecturers handle classroom challenges, relate with students and colleagues, manage stress, and maintain professional conduct. Findings reveal that higher

levels of emotional intelligence among academic staff are positively correlated with improved job performance, including better teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and collaboration. The study emphasizes that emotionally intelligent lecturers are more adaptable, have stronger interpersonal relationships, and are more resilient to job-related stress.

Recommendations

Based on the Findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

- i. There is need for Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria to encourage academic staff to cultivate intrinsic motivation by setting personal teaching goals, engaging in continuous learning, and participating in peer mentoring programs. Motivated lecturers are more likely to adopt inclusive teaching strategies and show greater commitment to addressing diverse learning needs, ensuring that students of varying abilities and backgrounds receive equitable support and opportunities to succeed.
- ii. Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria should train academic staff to develop and apply empathy-driven communication skills when engaging with students, particularly during academic advising and mentorship sessions. By practicing empathy, lecturers can better understand students' personal interests, challenges, and aspirations enabling them to offer personalized and meaningful career guidance that aligns with each student's strengths and goals.

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