

## Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Psycho-Social Behaviour among Undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in shaping the psycho-social behaviour of individuals, particularly among undergraduates who are navigating critical developmental stages. The study therefore examined the relationship that exists between emotional intelligence and the psycho-social behaviours of the Undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria. The research employed a descriptive research survey design of a correlational type. The population for the study focuses on undergraduates in Kwara State. A total of 180 undergraduates from the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, and Kwara State University, Malete formed the sample of the study. This method enabled the researchers to ideally get a sample of 180 respondents selected randomly without restrictions. For the purpose of collecting data through the questionnaires, the researchers designed a questionnaire which was titled “Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Psycho-Social Behaviour of Undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria (EIPBUKSNQ)”. To analyze the research questions, frequency and percentage descriptive statistics were used, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyze the hypotheses. As the emotional intelligence of undergraduates in Kwara State was found to be high, as was their psychosocial behaviour, it was revealed that there is a significant correlation between psychosocial behaviour and emotional intelligence ( $r = 0.820$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), although this was not the case for any of the genders. There was no significant correlation between emotional intelligence and psycho-social behavior based on gender ( $rpb = 0.427$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). It was established based on the results in the study that the predictive value of emotional intelligence on the psychosocial behaviour of undergraduate students in Nigeria’s Kwara State was found to be very high.

**Keywords:** Emotional intelligence, Psycho-social behaviour, Undergraduates, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Observations have shown that the world is suffering from “emotional ignorance” and that a myriad of issues, such as social depression, addiction, fear, pain, and various other states, are plaguing society. This prompted [1] to explore the nature and characteristics of emotion, and to devise a ‘theoretical and philosophical framework’ of emotional intelligence. He then realized that there were no actual courses designed to teach the nature of emotions or feelings. [1] assertions forged an entirely new domain in which profound insights awaited, as he had claimed. In the introduction, it was [1] remarked that his dissertation aimed to serve as a guide for enhancing emotional intelligence: a manual helping people become more intelligent, emotionally speaking. His approach toward emotional intelligence may be summarized with the help of three key components. The first component is about raising salient problems and questions with respect to emotions.

Looking over “concepts, methods, and tools for developing emotional intelligence” was the last area, and the second would be by providing a vocabulary and a framework to enable us to consider and speak about the problems and questions that were posed [1]. [2] For instance, after [1] work, used the term ‘Emotional Intelligence’ for the second time when they defined it as “A social intelligence that defines the ability to monitor the emotions and feelings of oneself and others, to discriminate them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and conduct. They concluded that individuals need to be able to navigate their own emotions and those belonging to other people. Therefore, people with high emotional intelligence were able to help themselves and others in just about every aspect of life.

However, it was not until 1990 that the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) was ingrained in society to the extent that it is used today after the publication of [3] book "Emotional Intelligence, Why EI Matters More Than IQ" [3]. As [3] notes on his website [3], the intention of the book was for two strangers to meet, and at least one of them would mention the phrase "emotional intelligence" so that both of them would know what it referred to. He later confesses how little he understood the impact that Emotional Intelligence would make. The book received critical acclaim and sold over 5 million copies, translating into over 30 different languages. According to [3], what astonished him the most was the profound impact it had in business, especially in the "leadership and development" fields that will be discussed later in this paper. Intelligence quotient was seen as the standard of excellence in life prior to his work being introduced to the market, but he began to think differently about the elements of life success. The Harvard Corporate Review [3] stated that emotional intelligence was one of the most potent business concepts of the decade, and it is an innovative, paradigm-shifting concept. It is not an exaggeration to believe that emotional intelligence is now a significant factor in just about any country around the world. Numerous people and researchers have become interested in it, and they have authored numerous books, magazines, newspaper articles, scientific experiments, and other works.

Psycho-social behaviour describes how people interact and act in social situations, whereas emotional intelligence describes the capacity to identify and comprehend one's own feelings as well as those of others. In the middle of the 1990s, [4] made the idea of emotional intelligence widely known with his book "Emotional Intelligence." He underlined the need to identify and control emotions as well as how they affect both professional and personal success. The capacity to control your own emotions as well as comprehend those of those around you is known as emotional intelligence (EI). High EI is correlated with strong interpersonal skills, especially in the domains of communication and conflict resolution, which are vital in the workplace. Employees with good control over their emotions are often also capable of not acting out of impulse since they think about their course of action prior to taking it. Being a team player means you have to be empathetic and understanding; you must be able to connect what someone does with a deeper feeling and be able to help manage relationships and make the person feel that you are paying attention to them. The first step to prevent the emotional taking over of you personally is to be aware of your emotions. Being aware of how you feel and why allows you to be able to sit down and approach them constructively. The 2009 book Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by [5] examined the importance of emotional intelligence as a significant concept in the modern work environment and offered practical ways of improving it. Rationally smart leaders are often good. It is important that leaders are self-aware and can objectively perceive things in the workplace. This is translated as being modest and conscious of your own strengths and weaknesses.

The multifaceted concept of emotional intelligence (EI) includes the capacity to identify, comprehend, express, and control one's own emotions as well as the capacity to perceive, understand, and react to those of others. It has a significant impact on a person's social and psychological development, affecting their relationships with others, their academic performance, and their level of contentment with life in general. The psychosocial behaviour of undergraduate students in Kwara State, Nigeria, which encompasses elements like mental health, adaptability, social skills, and general well-being, can be significantly influenced by their emotional intelligence. Early pioneers in the field of emotional intelligence were regarded [2]. The idea was first proposed in 1990 and was defined as the "ability to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions in oneself and others." Cultural, economic, and educational aspects are some of the elements that affect the psycho-social behaviour of undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria. It's important to remember that individual experiences and behaviours might differ greatly, even though I can give a broad summary of certain common elements and trends. Observable responses that an organism displays to environmental stimuli are known as behaviour. Watson and Pieron were the first psychologists to use the term "behaviour" in the context of behaviourism. Individuals model their social behaviour (conduct) after the norms of the society they belong to. Otherwise, a behaviour known as deviant behaviour, such as vagrancy, delinquency, etc., is established that disregards the laws and institutional regulations.

Human behaviour is shaped by a wide range of internal and external influences, and norms and standards impacted by society are used to determine what constitutes appropriate behaviour [6]. Pierre Janet introduced the idea of conduct to psychology, which interprets it as including both the entirety of "outside" visible manifestations and the entirety of invisible organizational and regulating processes [7]. Human health can be thought of as a condition that is etched on the boundary that delineates the normalcy of an individual's life; that is, the preservation of the individual's structural equilibrium from both an internal and external standpoint, as well as the adaptive equilibrium between the individual and his physical surroundings. According to [8], a state of health is one of harmony and well-being with reference to the development of the biological complex, psychological aspects, and social aspects of human behaviour. Influence is particularly significant in the structure of psychosocial phenomena and processes because it is a key component of social integration and organization. The psychosocial phenomena known as influence refer to the alteration of cognitive-intellectual, orientative-attitudinal, or behavioural-actional systems that arise from interactions between social events, organizations, and groups. Influence is defined narrowly as the process by which a social actor (individual, group, organization, or institution) decides to change the attitudes and behaviours of certain individuals or groups. According to [9,10], the influence is deemed to be primarily unilateral in this instance.

The child's behaviour changes in accordance with the social information they continue to acquire [11]. In order to start knowing the proper social interaction style based on the circumstances, one must understand how to act

in accordance with the interactions and individuals that are pertinent to a particular context. As a result, behaviour is always evolving as needed, and maturity triggers this. In order to properly respond to contextual cues and comprehend the intentions and desires of others, a kid must learn to balance their own desires with those of others they deal with. As they get older, they get better at this [12]. Although this learnability varies throughout children, the particular traits of the child (their temperament) are crucial to comprehending how the youngster picks up social behaviours and cues [13].

According to [14], psycho-social behaviour is behaviour that is aimed at society or that occurs between individuals of the same species. Predation is an example of a behaviour that is not social because it involves individuals from different species. It is a blend of social behaviour and psychology. Adolescence is the most prevalent period of childhood for psychological and social (psychosocial) difficulties, especially those related to behaviour and academics. Adolescents are frequently beyond the direct supervision of parents and are far more autonomous and mobile. A mental health professional should assess teenagers for a psychosocial problem when their misbehaviour becomes serious and persistent. Adolescence is a time when eating disorders, anxiety, and sadness are more prevalent. Weariness or chronic weariness, headaches, dizziness, and chest or stomach pain are some of the physical symptoms that adolescents with anxiety or mood problems may experience. Doctors frequently test for depression during exams because it is widespread in teenagers. Suicidal ideation, or suicidal thoughts, is widespread, although suicide is rare. Suicidal thoughts in adolescents necessitate an urgent mental health assessment, and parents shouldn't attempt to assess the severity of the issue alone. Adolescence is a common time for anxiety, mood disorders, and disruptive behavioural disorders, including oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder to appear. Many teenagers' rates of anxiety and depression have been impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic and the worldwide response to it, which has included adjustments to daily schedules and educational programs.

Nearly all psychologists concur that intellect rises until adolescence and then falls as people age. Intelligence development occurs quickly until the age of 14, after which it halts at any point between 14 and 22 years of age [15]. [16] believed that at the age of sixteen, both adults and children reach the maximum of their IQ development. According to Thorndike's research, a person's capacity for learning develops up until the age of 22, and it persists until the age of 45. Some psychologists claim that the IQ of normal children increases until the age of sixteen, but the IQ of dumb children only increases until the age of fourteen. It continues to develop till the age of twenty in the case of youngsters that fall into the genius group. The precise age at which intelligence develops, however, has not been established. This issue still exists today as it did in the past.

It's critical to comprehend how emotional intelligence and psychosocial behaviour relate to one another among Kwara State undergraduates for a number of reasons. In the first place, it can shed light on how emotional intelligence might be used to improve students' social skills, emotional control, and general mental well-being. Second, it can guide the creation of programs and interventions meant to enhance the psycho-social well-being of students.

Numerous higher institutions, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, are situated in Kwara State, which is in North Central Nigeria. One of the most important times in young adults' lives is the move from high school to college. Undergraduates encounter many academic, social, and personal obstacles during this time, and their ability to handle these obstacles can be impacted by their emotional intelligence. Their relationships, academic achievement, mental health, and general adjustment to university life can all be impacted by their capacity for effective emotion management. Even though emotional intelligence may be important, there isn't much empirical study in Kwara State that explicitly looks at the connection between undergraduates' psycho-social behaviour and emotional intelligence. The creation of interventions and support programs to improve the academic performance and general well-being of Kwara State undergraduates may benefit from an understanding of this link.

Since emotions are linked to an individual's behavior, they also have a significant impact on how social behavior develops. Emotion plays a significant part in communication since it may be perceived through a variety of verbal and nonverbal cues in social interactions. There is typically a strong correlation between the brain systems that underlie emotion and those required for social behavior. Understanding the thoughts and feelings of others is a key component of interaction, and the ability to recognize emotional states becomes essential for people to engage with each other and respond in a socially acceptable manner [17].

The main goal of the [18] study was to determine whether pro-social behavior and emotional intelligence could predict university students' academic success. To do this, a stratified simple random sampling technique was used to collect data from 103 (m = 50, F = 53) students. Pro-social behavior and emotional intelligence were found to be statistically significantly positively correlated, according to the Pearson correlation coefficient values. Nevertheless, it was discovered that academic success and emotional intelligence were unrelated. However, there was a statistically significant inverse relationship between students' academic success and pro-social behavior. Multivariate regression analysis revealed that while emotional intelligence did not predict students' academic success, it did predict their pro-social behavior. However, pro-social behavior was a strong and unfavorable predictor of kids' academic success. Furthermore, pro-social behavior and emotional intelligence did not significantly differ by gender.

[19] study looks at how self-esteem among teenagers in Anambra State is correlated with emotional intelligence and empathy. The study finds a strong correlation between the self-esteem and emotional intelligence of teenagers enrolled in undergraduate programs at public universities in the state of Anambra. Adolescent

undergraduate students' self-esteem and empathy are significantly correlated at Anambra State's public universities. According to the study's findings, teenage students' self-esteem at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam, and Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), Awka was favourably and significantly connected with their emotional intelligence and empathy. The study suggests, among other things, that public universities in Anambra State should emphasize emotional intelligence as part of the regular secondary school curriculum.

Some psycho-social characteristics were examined as predictors of truancy behavior among secondary school pupils in Ogun State, Nigeria by [20]. The study design used was a descriptive survey. Three hundred students from five randomly chosen schools out of the eighteen secondary schools in Ogun State's Ijebu North Local Government Area participated in the study using a stratified random sampling technique. With a mean age of 10.4 years and a standard deviation of 4.46, their ages varied from 11 to 19. Students' truancy behavior and psychological characteristics (self-efficacy, self-esteem, anxiety, child-parent connection, and peer-group impact) were evaluated using six valid and reliable measures.

[19] conducted a study that examined the connections between adolescents in Anambra State's emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-esteem. The study, which polled 300 college students at the 200 level, found a strong relationship between self-esteem and empathy and emotional intelligence. The findings highlighted the strong and favorable relationships between self-esteem, empathy, and emotional intelligence among teenage students at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University and Nnamdi Azikiwe University. In order to improve self-esteem outcomes, it was suggested that secondary school curricula integrate emotional intelligence. In Ogun State, Nigeria, 300 secondary school students participated in a study on psycho-social factors that predict truancy [20]. The study used a descriptive survey approach and found that peer-group influence, child-parent connections, anxiety, self-efficacy, and self-esteem were important psycho-social factors. These characteristics together predicted truancy, according to multiple regression analysis, with peer-group influence being the most powerful predictor.

There is a dearth of thorough research on the connection between undergraduates' psycho-social behaviour and emotional intelligence in Kwara State, Nigeria, which calls for empirical study. Despite the fact that emotional intelligence has been extensively researched in a variety of settings, little is known about Nigerian undergraduates, which is why this study was conducted. intends to close this study gap by examining the emotional intelligence levels of undergraduates in the area and how they affect their psycho-social behaviour. The development of tactics and interventions to improve emotional intelligence and encourage favourable psycho-social outcomes among Nigerian undergraduates will be feasible by clarifying this relationship. Finding the issues with psycho-social behaviour among Kwara State undergraduates entails taking into account several variables that could affect their general well-being and interpersonal connections. The following are possible trouble spots: Excessive Stress, due to the strain of coursework, financial limitations, and the difficulties of adjusting to university life, undergraduates in Kwara State may experience higher levels of stress. Their psycho-social health may suffer as a result of this stress. This study investigated the connection between undergraduates' psychosocial behaviour and emotional intelligence in Kwara State, Nigeria.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the descriptive survey design of a correlational type. The targeted population for this study consists of Faculty of Education undergraduates from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, and Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State. The sample for this study consists of 180 Faculty of Education undergraduates who were chosen from the two public universities in Kwara State. In other words, the researcher used a simple random sampling technique to select 90 students each from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, and Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Psycho-Social Behaviour of Undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria" (EIPPBUKSNQ) was the instrument employed to collect the data. Three sections (A, B, and C) made up the instrument. Section A sought demographic information of the respondents, such as Name of Institution, Faculty, Level, Sex, and Age bracket. The second section has 20 structured items that sought information on the emotional intelligence of university undergraduates based on three projective rating scale models of Always (A), Sometime (S), and Never (N). A four-point Likert scale model of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) served as the basis for the 15 items in the third segment, which elicited information on psycho-social behaviour of university undergraduates.

Following the incorporation of constructive criticism, two experts in Educational Psychology and Tests and Measurements thoroughly examined and validated the study instrument. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were given to undergraduate students at a different university not involved in the study in order to assess the instrument's reliability, which yielded a 0.75 coefficient value. The researchers used frequency and percentages in a descriptive statistical approach. Additionally, the data based on each research question is represented in its frequency tables. Inferential statistics in the form of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to test the hypothesis. The PPMC was used to check linear relationships between emotional intelligence and psycho-social behaviour, while Point Biserial Correlation (PBC) was used to isolate the EI-psycho-social behaviour link by controlling for other factors like gender.

## RESULTS

**Research question 1:** What is the level of emotional intelligence among undergraduates in Kwara State?

**Table 1:** Descriptive analysis of the level of emotional intelligence among undergraduates in Kwara State

S/N	Level	Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low	10-14	15	8.3
2.	Moderate	15-20	64	35.6
3.	High	21-30	101	56.0
Total			180	100.0

**N = 180**

Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the level of emotional intelligence among undergraduates in Kwara State. It can be inferred from the Table that the level of emotional intelligence among undergraduates was high at 56.0% in Kwara State. The majority having high emotional intelligence indicates that most undergraduates in the study area are capable of managing emotions, empathizing, and coping with stress, which is crucial for thriving in a demanding university environment.

**Research question 2:** What is the level of psycho-social behaviour among undergraduates in Kwara State?

**Table 2:** Descriptive analysis of the level of psycho-social behaviour among undergraduates in Kwara State

S/N	Level	Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low	10-14	9	5.0
2.	Moderate	15-20	62	34.4
3.	High	21-30	109	60.6
Total			180	100.0

**N = 180**

Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis of the level of psycho-social behaviour among undergraduates in Kwara State. It can be deduced from the Table that the level of psycho-social behaviour among undergraduates was high at 60.6% in Kwara State. A "high" level of psychosocial behaviour suggests that a majority of students possess strong social competence, good emotional regulation, and positive relationships with peers and staff. This indicates a relatively healthy, supportive social environment within Kwara State universities that can foster better mental health.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and the social behaviour of undergraduates in Kwara State.

**Table 3:** Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the relationship between emotional intelligence and psycho-social behaviour of undergraduates in Kwara State

Groups	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
EI	180	24.70	5.50	0.820	.001	Significant
PB	180	26.55	6.03			

( $r = 0.820$ ;  $p < 0.05$ )

Emotional Intelligence (EI); Psycho-social Behaviour (PB)

Table 3 shows a significant correlation between Kwara State undergraduates' psycho-social behavior and emotional intelligence ( $r = 0.820$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Consequently, the null hypothesis, which claims that there is no meaningful connection between Kwara State undergraduates' psycho-social behavior and emotional intelligence, is hereby rejected. The findings suggest that undergraduates in the study area's psycho-social behaviour is predicted by emotional intelligence. The strong, positive, and significant correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and the psycho-social behavior of Kwara State undergraduates indicates that students with high EI are much more likely to exhibit positive, adaptive, and stable behavior. Undergraduates with high EI possess superior emotional regulation, allowing them to manage stress, anxiety, and frustration as common in university life without resorting to maladaptive behaviours

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social behaviour of undergraduates in Kwara State based on gender.

**Table 4:** Point Biserial Correlation (PBC) of the relationship between emotional intelligence and psycho-social behaviour of undergraduates based on gender in Kwara State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	$r_{pb}$	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remark
Male	95	25.71	5.11	0.427	.506	Not significant
Female	85	25.54	5.21			

( $r_{pb} = 0.427$ ;  $p > 0.05$ )

Table 4 shows that among Kwara State undergraduates, there is no significant correlation between emotional intelligence and psycho-social behavior based on gender ( $r_{pb} = 0.427$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, it is decided not to reject the null hypothesis, which claims that there is no meaningful correlation between emotional intelligence and the psycho-social behavior of Kwara State undergraduates, depending on gender. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence and psychosocial behavior in undergraduates in the research area are not predicted by gender.

## DISCUSSION

The results demonstrated that Kwara State undergraduates have a high degree of emotional intelligence. The outcome somewhat validates the conclusions of [19]. The study finds a strong correlation between the self-esteem and emotional intelligence of teenagers enrolled in undergraduate programs at public universities. Adolescent undergraduate students' self-esteem and empathy are significantly correlated at public universities. The study's findings showed that Kwara State undergraduates exhibited a high degree of psycho-social behavior. In an investigation conducted by [20]. The findings showed that whereas peer-group influence is the most powerful predictor of truancy behaviour, all psycho-social factors together predict truancy behaviour. The findings' ramifications for counseling and education were emphasized.

The study's findings also demonstrated a strong correlation between Kwara State undergraduates' psychosocial behavior and emotional intelligence. The outcome supports the findings of [19], which found strong relationships between self-esteem, empathy and emotional intelligence. The findings highlighted the strong and favorable relationships among teenage pupils between emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-esteem. The study's findings also showed that there is no discernible link between Kwara State undergraduates' psycho-social behavior and emotional intelligence based on gender. This could probably be because Nigerian culture often promotes emotional restraint in public, particularly in academic settings where respecting authority (lecturers) is paramount. Both genders are trained to suppress emotional reactions to maintain a respectful, if sometimes passive, demeanor, which may decouple emotional awareness from outward behavioural expression. The outcome somewhat confirms [18] findings, which showed no connection between academic success and emotional intelligence. However, there was a statistically significant inverse relationship between students' academic success and pro-social behavior. However, pro-social behavior was a strong and unfavorable predictor of kids' academic success. Furthermore, pro-social behavior and emotional intelligence did not significantly differ by gender. Nonetheless, there was a statistically significant difference in academic attainment between male and female students, and male students outperformed their female counterparts overall.

## CONCLUSION

The study found that undergraduates in Kwara State had high levels of emotional intelligence and psycho-social behavior, and that there was a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and psycho-social behavior. There was no significant correlation between the undergraduates' psycho-social behavior and gender in Kwara State. Based on this, the study recommended that:

1. Future research and programmes that expressly target the development of emotional intelligence abilities should be put into place, according to the study's conclusions. It is possible to deliver these programmes and research as workshops and seminars or include them into already-existing curriculum.
2. The establishment of counseling and support services that cater to students' psycho-social needs is necessary. These services, which offer tools and direction to assist students in overcoming emotional obstacles, ought to be both proactive and reactive.
3. Although there was no discernible gender difference in the study's findings regarding the association between emotional intelligence and psycho-social behaviour, it is crucial to make sure that programmes aimed at improving emotional intelligence are open to and accessible to all students, regardless of gender.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors do not have any conflicts of interest to declare.

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