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DIMENSIONS OF SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AS CORRELATES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING OF ACADEMIC LECTURERS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the dimensions of socio-emotional competence as correlates of psychological wellbeing of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study while four null hypotheses were formulated. This study adopted a descriptive correlational survey research design. The target population for the study comprised 300 accessible lecturers in the three public universities in Osun State. From this accessible population, a sample of 150 respondents was selected using simple random sampling technique. Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire. The instrument was divided into two sections: Section A was adapted from the Wong and Law Socio-emotional competence Scale (WLEIS) and was modified to capture the dimensions of socio-emotional competence, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and Empathy. Section B measured psychological wellbeing using a standardized Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS) adapted from Ryff's model of psychological wellbeing, covering dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The instrument was validated through expert review and subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency and values of 0.79 and 0.78 were obtained for WLEIS and PWS respectively. Linear regression was used to answer the research questions and also used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.The finding revealed that self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation had positive and significant relationships with the psychological wellbeing of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State. It was also found that empathy showed a weak positive and non-significant relationship with psychological wellbeing. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that university management should organize regular socio-emotional competence development programmes such as self-reflection workshops, emotional awareness training, and counselling sessions for academic lecturers. These programmes would help lecturers better understand their emotional triggers, strengths, and coping patterns, thereby improving emotional balance and psychological wellbeing.

Keywords: Academic Lecturers, Socio-emotional competence, Psychological Wellbeing, Public Universities

Introduction

The university system across the world has increasingly become characterized by intense academic demands, institutional pressures, and rapidly changing professional expectations. Academic lecturers are expected to combine teaching, research, community service, supervision, publication responsibilities, and administrative duties within environments that are often constrained by inadequate funding and infrastructural limitations. In Nigeria, public universities particularly operate under conditions marked by workload expansion, irregular academic calendars, pressure for research productivity, and rising student populations, all of which place substantial psychological demands on lecturers.

As noted by National Universities Commission and supported by recent empirical studies, many lecturers experience emotional exhaustion, stress-related fatigue, and declining psychological wellness due to persistent occupational strain (Adeniji & Osibanjo, 2022; Ojo & Adenuga, 2021; Ugwuanyi, Ezema & Nwosu, 2023). These conditions have raised growing concern about the emotional capacities lecturers require to sustain psychological wellbeing while functioning effectively within demanding academic environments.

Public universities in Osun State are not exempt from these realities. Lecturers within institutions such as Osun State University, Obafemi Awolowo University, and University of Ilesa continually navigate competing institutional expectations involving research publications, postgraduate supervision, student mentoring, conference participation, and administrative engagements. In many cases, these responsibilities are performed amidst limited institutional resources and increasing performance evaluation standards. According to Adeyemi and Oladipo (2020), prolonged exposure to occupational demands without adequate emotional adjustment mechanisms contributes significantly to stress and psychological instability among university lecturers. Similarly, Yusuf, Adisa and Bello (2021) observed that lecturers in Nigerian public universities often experience anxiety, emotional fatigue, and reduced life satisfaction associated with excessive work pressure and institutional uncertainty. Supporting this position, Olalekan and Adebisi (2022), Ogunode and Abubakar (2021), maintained that deteriorating working conditions within public universities have increased concerns about the mental and emotional health of academic staff.

Psychological wellbeing refers to an individual's overall positive psychological functioning, including self-acceptance, emotional stability, personal growth, autonomy, purpose in life, and the ability to maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships. Within the academic profession, psychological wellbeing is essential because lecturers are expected to remain intellectually productive, emotionally balanced, and socially responsive despite continuous workplace challenges (Ibrahim & Aluko, 2020). Ryff's multidimensional perspective on psychological wellbeing has remained widely influential in explaining how individuals sustain healthy psychological functioning under stressful conditions (Ede, Ezeh & Ugwu, 2021). More recent studies have equally emphasized that psychologically healthy lecturers are more likely to demonstrate higher teaching effectiveness, stronger professional commitment, improved interpersonal relationships, and greater job satisfaction (Adebayo &Ogunsina, 2023; Chukwudi & Olabisi, 2022). One major psychological factor that has attracted increasing scholarly attention in relation to wellbeing is socio-emotional competence.

Socio-emotional competence refers to the capacity of individuals to perceive, understand, regulate, interpret, and appropriately manage emotions in themselves and in others. The concept has become increasingly relevant within educational and organizational settings because emotionally intelligent individuals are believed to cope better with stress,

maintain healthier social relationships, and adapt more effectively to occupational pressures. Goleman's socio-emotional competence framework identifies important dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, all of which influence how individuals respond to emotional experiences within the workplace. According to Akinyemi and Akinyemi (2021), lecturers with strong socio-emotional competence are often better able to manage classroom pressures, maintain professional relationships, and sustain emotional balance during challenging academic activities. In another study, Okon, Ibiam and Nwachukwu (2023) reported that socio-emotional competence significantly predicted emotional adjustment and occupational effectiveness among university employees. Similar findings were also reported by Bello and Jakada (2020) and Ezeani and Oladele (2024)who concluded that socio-emotional competence contributes substantially to psychological resilience and emotional stability among academic professionals.

Despite the growing body of literature on socio-emotional competence and workplace outcomes, there remains limited empirical attention on how specific dimensions of socio-emotional competence correlate with the psychological wellbeing of academic lecturers in public universities within Osun State (Adeoye &Torubelli, 2022; Ezeani & Oladele, 2024). Many existing studies have concentrated largely on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, burnout, or occupational stress without comprehensively examining how dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills relate to lecturers' psychological wellbeing. For instance, Adeoye and Torubelli (2022) focused on socio-emotional competence and job performance, while Ogunode and Abubakar (2021) emphasized occupational stress in Nigerian universities. Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2021) examined work-related pressure without specifically exploring the multidimensional relationship between socio-emotional competence and psychological wellbeing among lecturers. Consequently, there is still insufficient empirical evidence explaining how dimensions of socio-emotional competence function as correlates of psychological wellbeing among academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State, Nigeria. It is against this background that this study was undertaken.

Statement of the Problem

Many lecturers experience emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, anxiety, and declining enthusiasm for academic work. The continuous demand to meet institutional expectations, combined with personal and family responsibilities, often leads to difficulty in maintaining emotional stability and psychological balance. When psychological wellbeing is compromised, it may result in burnout, reduced productivity, poor classroom engagement, weakened interpersonal relationships, and declining commitment to academic responsibilities. These outcomes not only affect lecturers individually but also have implications for students' learning outcomes and the overall quality of university education.

In response to these challenges, socio-emotional competence has been identified as a key psychological resource that may influence how individuals manage stress and maintain wellbeing. Socio-emotional competence, particularly its dimensions; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills plays a crucial role in how lecturers perceive and respond to workplace demands. Lecturers with higher socio-emotional competence are more likely to understand their emotional states, regulate stress effectively, remain motivated despite challenges, show empathy in interactions, and maintain healthy professional relationships. These abilities can potentially enhance psychological resilience and promote better wellbeing in demanding academic environments.

However, despite growing attention to socio-emotional competence in organizational and educational research, there is still limited empirical evidence on how its specific dimensions relate to psychological wellbeing among academic lecturers in Nigerian public universities, particularly in Osun State. Most existing studies have focused on broader constructs such as job stress, burnout, job satisfaction, or general socio-emotional competence without disaggregating its dimensions or linking them directly to psychological wellbeing in the academic context. Additionally, much of the available literature has concentrated on other professional groups, leaving a contextual and conceptual gap in understanding how socio-emotional competence functions among university lecturers. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the dimensions of socio-emotional competence as correlates of psychological wellbeing among academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between self-awareness and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State?
2. What is the relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State?
3. What is the relationship between motivation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State?
4. What is the relationship between empathy and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between self-awareness and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State
2. There is no significant relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State
3. There is no significant relationship between motivation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State
4. There is no significant relationship between empathy and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State

Literature Review

Concept of Self-Awareness and Psychological Well-being

Self-awareness occupies a critical position because it enables individuals to recognize and understand their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and emotional triggers. Lecturers who possess strong self-awareness are often more conscious of how workplace pressures affect their emotional state and are therefore better positioned to regulate their reactions constructively. Self-awareness supports reflective thinking, emotional stability, and effective coping during stressful academic engagements. A lecturer who understands personal emotional limits is more likely to manage frustration arising from workload, student behaviour, or institutional demands without experiencing severe psychological strain. According to Ekanem and Bassey (2021), self-awareness significantly enhances emotional adjustment and reduces vulnerability to occupational stress among educators. Supporting this view, Ibrahim and Ahmed (2022) argued that self-awareness promotes positive self-concept, emotional balance, and overall psychological wellbeing in professional settings.

Concept of Self-regulation and Psychological Well-being

Self-regulation, another important dimension of socio-emotional competence, involves the ability to control impulses, manage emotional reactions, and respond appropriately to stressful situations. In university environments where lecturers are frequently confronted with administrative pressures, deadlines, and interpersonal conflicts, self-regulation becomes essential for maintaining psychological wellbeing. Lecturers who effectively regulate their emotions are less likely to experience emotional breakdown, aggression, or prolonged psychological distress when faced with institutional challenges. A study by Ogunyemi and Kehinde (2021) revealed that emotional self-control contributes significantly to stress reduction and emotional stability among academic staff. Likewise, Ajayi and Adeniran (2022) found that lecturers with stronger self-regulation abilities demonstrated better mental health outcomes and higher resilience under occupational pressure. Falade and Akomolafe (2024) further established that self-regulation strengthens coping capacity and promotes healthier psychological functioning in educational institutions.

Concept of Motivation and Psychological Well-being

Motivation as a dimension of socio-emotional competence also plays a significant role in shaping lecturers' psychological wellbeing. Intrinsically motivated lecturers often maintain optimism, commitment, and perseverance despite the challenges associated with the academic profession. Motivation enables lecturers to derive personal satisfaction and purpose from teaching, research, and scholarly contributions even in situations where external rewards appear inadequate. According to Adekanbi and Okolie (2021), emotionally intelligent lecturers with strong internal motivation are more likely to maintain psychological resilience and career satisfaction. Similarly, Eze and Nwachukwu (2020) observed that motivation enhances positive psychological functioning by promoting achievement orientation and emotional endurance among university staff. Supporting these findings, Alabi and Lawal (2023) emphasized that motivated lecturers tend to exhibit greater life satisfaction, emotional positivity, and professional fulfilment.

Concept of Empathy and Psychological Well-being

Empathy is equally important dimensions of socio-emotional competence that contribute to lecturers' psychological wellbeing. Empathy refers to the ability to understand and appropriately respond to the emotions and experiences of others, while social skills involve the capacity to build healthy interpersonal relationships and communicate effectively. In the university setting, lecturers constantly interact with students, colleagues, administrators, and external stakeholders. Positive social interactions therefore become essential for emotional stability and professional adjustment. Lecturers with strong empathy and interpersonal skills are more likely to maintain supportive workplace relationships, resolve conflicts effectively, and experience a sense of belonging within the academic community. As observed by Afolaranmi and Adebimpe (2021), interpersonal competence significantly predicts emotional wellbeing and occupational adjustment among educators. Similarly, Kareem and Yusuf (2024) reported that empathy and social competence reduce feelings of isolation, improve emotional support systems, and enhance psychological wellbeing among university lecturers.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational survey research design. The target population for the study comprised all academic lecturers in Obafemi Awolowo University, Osun State University, and University of Ilesa, Ilesa. The population cut across different academic ranks,

including Graduate Assistants, Lecturers II, Lecturers I, Senior Lecturers, Readers, and Professors. From this population, a total of 300 academic staff were identified as the accessible population due to their availability and willingness to participate in the study. From this accessible population, a sample of 150 respondents was selected using simple random sampling technique to ensure equal opportunity of selection and reduce sampling bias.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire. The instrument was divided into three sections: Section A obtained demographic information of respondents such as gender, age, academic rank, and years of teaching experience. Section B was adapted from the Wong and Law Socio-emotional competence Scale (WLEIS) and was modified to capture the dimensions of socio-emotional competence, namely self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and Empathy. It consists of 16 items designed to measure four dimensions of socio-emotional competence: self-awareness (4 items), self-regulation (4 items), motivation (4 items), and empathy (4 items). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The coefficient values of 0.76, 0.77, 0.87 and 0.83 were obtained for each of the clusters; and an overall coefficient of 0.79 was obtained.

Section C measured psychological wellbeing using a standardized Psychological Wellbeing Scale adapted from Ryff's model of psychological wellbeing, covering dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The instrument was validated through expert review and subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency. The coefficient value of 0.78 was obtained.

The questionnaire was self-administered with the assistance of research assistants who helped distribute and retrieve copies from the selected academic staff within their respective faculties. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the data collection process. Linear regression was used to answer the research questions and also used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.

Results

Table 1: Linear regression on self-awareness and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State

Linear Regression	R	R^2	B	Df	t	a.level	p-value
	.725[a]	.525	.525	148	5.11	.05	.000
a.	b. Predictors: (Constant), self-awareness						
	c. Dependent: psychological wellbeing						

The result in Table 1 reveals a statistically positive relationship between the two variables, $R = .725$, $R^2 = .525$, $\beta = .525$, $t(148) = 5.11$, $p < .05$. This indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between self-awareness and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between self-awareness and psychological well-being among academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State was therefore rejected. This is because the p-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is a

significant relationship between self-awareness and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State.

Table 2: Linear regression on the relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State

Linear Regression	R	R^2	B	Df	T	a.level	p-value
	.712[a]	.0.507	.712	148	22.38	.05	.000
a.	b. Predictors: (Constant), self-regulation						
	c. Dependent: psychological wellbeing						

The result in Table 2 reveals a statistically positive relationship between the two variables, $R = .712$, $R^2 = .507$, $\beta = .712$, $t(148) = 22.38$, $p < .05$. This indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being among academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State was therefore rejected. This is because the p-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State.

Table 3: Linear regression on the relationship between motivation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State

Linear Regression	R	R^2	B	Df	T	a.level	p-value
	.491[a]	.0.241	.491	148	12.45	.05	.000
a.	b. Predictors: (Constant), motivation						
	c. Dependent: psychological wellbeing						

The result in Table 3 reveals a statistically positive relationship between the two variables, $R = .491$, $R^2 = .241$, $\beta = .525$, $t(148) = 12.45$, $p < .05$. This indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between motivation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between motivation and psychological well-being among academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State was therefore rejected. This is because the p-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between motivation and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State.

Table 4: Linear regression on empathy and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State

Linear Regression	R	R^2	B	Df	t	a.level	p-value
	.392[a]	.0.154	.392	148	9.43	.05	.012
a.	b. Predictors: (Constant), empathy						
	c. Dependent: psychological wellbeing						

The result in Table 4 reveals a positive relationship between the two variables, $R = .392$, $R^2 = .0154$, $\beta = .525$, $t(148) = 9.43$, $p > .05$. This indicates that there is a weak positive relationship between empathy and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant predictive relationship between psychological well-being and self-awareness among

academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State was therefore not rejected. This is because the p-value of 0.12 is greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between empathy and psychological well-being of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed a strong positive and significant relationship between self-awareness and psychological wellbeing of academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State. This finding is consistent with the study of Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy and Weisberg (2009) who found that socio-emotional competence components, particularly self-awareness and emotional understanding, significantly enhanced psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, and life satisfaction among employees. Their study concluded that individuals who possess greater awareness of their emotional states are more likely to maintain positive psychological functioning and emotional stability. Similarly, Ye, Xuefen, Jenatabadi, Samsudin, Chunchun and Ishak (2024) reported that socio-emotional competence dimensions positively predicted psychological wellbeing among university students, emphasizing that self-awareness improved emotional adjustment and resilience under stressful academic conditions.

The finding further revealed a strong positive relationship between self-regulation and psychological wellbeing of academic lecturers. This finding agrees with the study of Ndukaihe, Ogbonnaya, Arinze and Ugwu (2025), who found that socio-emotional competence moderated emotional exhaustion among students exposed to lecturer-initiated incivility. Supporting this position, Carmeli, et al. (2009) equally reported that emotional management and self-regulation significantly contributed to self-acceptance and emotional wellbeing among workers.

The finding also showed a moderate positive and significant relationship between motivation and psychological wellbeing of academic lecturers. This result aligns with the findings of Ye, et al. (2024) who discovered that motivation and resilience mediated the relationship between socio-emotional competence and psychological wellbeing among university students. Similarly, Onbasili (2026) found that socio-emotional competence positively predicted psychological wellbeing among pre-service teachers, noting that motivational attributes enhanced coping capacity and emotional resilience.

Finally, the finding revealed a weak positive and non-significant relationship between empathy and psychological wellbeing of academic lecturers. This finding is partly supported by the study of Kato, Mugizi, Kasule and Kyozira (2023), which found that social awareness and relationship management showed inconsistent influence on organizational outcomes among lecturers, indicating that empathy-related socio-emotional competence dimensions may not always significantly predict wellbeing or professional adjustment. In contrast, the finding opposes the study of Makuloluwa and Arachchige (2015), who found that socio-emotional competence dimensions, including interpersonal awareness and empathy, were positively associated with psychological wellbeing and positive social relations among university students. The disagreement may be due to differences in study population, workplace realities, and institutional environments between lecturers in Nigerian public universities and participants in other educational settings.

Conclusion

This study examined the dimensions of socio-emotional competence as correlates of psychological wellbeing among academic lecturers in public universities in Osun State,

Nigeria. The study established that self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation significantly contributed to the psychological wellbeing of lecturers, while empathy showed a weak and non-significant relationship. The findings underscore the importance of socio-emotional competence in helping lecturers cope with occupational demands and maintain emotional stability within the university environment. The study therefore concludes that strengthening socio-emotional competence dimensions among lecturers is essential for improving psychological wellbeing, enhancing academic effectiveness, and promoting healthier and more productive university work environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. University management should organize regular socio-emotional competence development programmes such as self-reflection workshops, emotional awareness training, and counselling sessions for academic lecturers. These programmes would help lecturers better understand their emotional triggers, strengths, and coping patterns, thereby improving emotional balance and psychological wellbeing.
2. Public universities should establish supportive institutional policies that promote stress management and emotional control among lecturers. This can be achieved through workload management, flexible work arrangements, conflict management training, and the provision of psychological support services that help lecturers regulate emotional stress effectively.
3. University administrators should strengthen motivational strategies within the academic environment. Improved welfare packages, timely promotion, research grants, recognition of academic excellence, and conducive working conditions should be prioritized to enhance lecturers' morale, resilience, and psychological wellbeing.
4. Universities should still encourage interpersonal relationship-building and collaborative academic culture among lecturers. Team-building activities, mentorship programmes, and communication skills training may help strengthen empathy and social connectedness within the university system, which could indirectly support psychological wellbeing.

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