

Emotional intelligence profile of university administrators: A case of University of Benin, Nigeria

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Abstract

To cultivate a university environment that challenges the status quo and breeds excellence, university administrators need to learn, develop, and demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence. This paper, therefore, examines the emotional intelligence profile of university administrators at the University of Benin. It adopted a descriptive method of survey research as the design of the study. The population of the study comprised of University Administrators at the University of Benin, Nigeria. The sample comprised two hundred and thirteen (213) University Administrators purposely selected during a lecture. Data were collected using a twenty-five (25) item questionnaire tagged “Emotional Intelligence of University Administrators Questionnaire which was adapted from London Leadership Academy. The data collected were analysed using mean, frequency, percentage, t-test, and Anova. The findings revealed that University administrators scored high in emotional intelligence competencies. It was also found in the study that emotional intelligence among University administrators does not differ concerning gender, age, and years of experience. It was recommended that universities and other education institutes should strongly consider implementing emotional intelligence coaching programs for potential personnel who are in charge of administrative duties.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, University, Administrator, Age, Sex and Experience

Introduction

The university as an academic institution of higher learning has the goal of ensuring and providing a quality higher education. To do this, every university has a set of goals and objectives which must be attained through the efforts of units and departments. These units and departments are saddled with task and duties which are administered by

individuals generally called administrators. An administrator is an employee of an organisation or an institution who is charged with the role of planning, organising, directing, controlling, and evaluating the activities of the various units and sections of such institutions. Different names are attributed to administrators such as 'secretaries', 'office attendants', 'clerical officers', 'typists', 'data processors', which are dependent on the kind of work they are expected to do (Hollis-Turner, 2017).

In an academic institution such as a University, administrative duties and tasks differ in levels and capacities. Some are executed by academic staff who are not teaching or carrying out research while some are carried out by persons who were originally employed as administrative staff. Some of these tasks may include supervision, record keeping, coordination, security, maintenance, liaison, construction, repairs, managing students' affairs, admission, employment, and promotion among others. These tasks and duties are ascribed to a particular unit within the university system. One of the units in the University in Nigeria is the Registry with the Registrar as the head. The major staff in the registry department occupy the role of administrative officer, administrative assistants, assistant registrar, senior assistant registrar, principal assistant registrar, and deputy registrar. Considering the peculiarities of these personnel and their regular interaction with almost every member of the university community, this paper captured them as University Administrators and its focus.

Generally, these individuals carry out duties assigned to them in the capacity of administrators and are faced with growing, demanding, complex, and often very sensitive tasks and responsibilities. Apparently, these duties and tasks bear on their skills, competencies, and abilities. Among such competencies is emotional intelligence. According to Serrat (2017), emotional intelligence describes the ability, capacity, skill, or self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and manage the emotion of one's self, of others, and groups. Goleman defined EI as "the capacity for recognizing our feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships (Goleman, 2013).

We are in an era when resources (both human and non-human) may appear to difficult to manage and emotions are easily sparked in the course of discharging administrative duties. Emotions are an indispensable aspect of executing administrative tasks. This is because, within organisations, emotions serve as the social glue and can greatly influence numerous aspects of employees' relations (Narong, 2015) and play key roles in the workplace (Rajah, Song & Arvey, 2011). Emotions can be intense, disruptive, demotivating, motivating, exhilarating, positive, and negative, and they can test the administrative skills and abilities of any individual. They are not just something that we feel; they are a source of information. As a result, university administrators as superiors and subordinates must learn to be open to emotional information. With emotional information, they can build trust and cooperation with students, display empathy to co-

workers, display social awareness and develop collaboration with boss and subordinates as well as display skill in addressing challenges. Therefore, it may be plausible that university administrators incorporate the competencies of emotional intelligence to cope with the daily challenges which their various job positions offer.

The theoretical perspective of this study was adopted and is guided by the ideas from the findings of Goleman's (2000, 2013) study on emotional intelligence in the workplace. Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2013) documented that the work rules are changing," and those rules lay emphasis on personal qualities, such as ingenuity and empathy, flexibility and persuasiveness. Goleman further explained that emotional competence is principally fundamental to a leadership role whose essence is getting others to do carry out their task efficiently. Goleman (2013) highlighted the components of EI as follows:

- Self-awareness: This is the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others.
- Self-regulation: This includes the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods.
- Motivation: This entails the passion to work for reasons that go beyond financial gain or status and with optimism, even in the face of failure.
- Empathy: This is the skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions which may be demonstrated with expertise in building and retaining talent.
- Social skill: This includes the proficiency in managing interactions, relationships, and building networks which is showcased by effectiveness in initiating and leading positive change.

Emotional Intelligence as a construct is significant and relevant to present-day organizational climates and educational settings (Fannon, 2018). Today, the higher education sector faces several challenges. These challenges include among others attracting and retaining excellent students and staff, training the workforce to be more skilled, using new pedagogical approaches, meeting the growing demands of the stakeholders such as students, staff, the government, and the general public (Abdul, Abd & Azizi, 2015). These challenges are likely to take a toll on the emotional stability and coping ability of the university administrators. Undoubtedly, an attempt to manage these challenges may constitute occupational stress for university administrators, hence the need for emotional intelligence in the workplace. Since administration demands daily interaction with an array of emotion-laden scenarios, higher levels of emotional intelligence may better assist the administrator in effectively managing the day-to-day personal and administrative activities associated with their tasks.

Some studies established that leaders high in emotional intelligence may be more skillful in influencing, inspiring, intellectually stimulating, and growing their staff as well as other professional competencies (Al-Tae & Alwael, 2012; Serrat, 2017). During this period of dynamic organizational structure, emotional intelligence is very important not only to control one's emotions but also other peoples' emotions. Employees with high EI are said to reflect better working relationships because they can foster better and positive interactions which thereby lead to better performance (Dhani & Sharma, 2016). Employees with high EI are better at teamwork, punctuality, accuracy, and more competent as compared to the ones who score low on EI (Dhani, Sehwat & Sharma, 2016). Emotional intelligence may enable the university administrators to identify, understand key decision-making mental processes, comprehend their underlying emotions, and guide them to achieve better outcomes in their respective roles.

Statement of the Problem

There have been diverse changes that have greeted administrators as employees in the workplace. The factors for determining workplace and employees' success and effectiveness are evolving and assuming new dimensions. Employees are now being weighed by new criteria. According to Fannon (2018), these criteria are characterised by how well employees handle themselves and one another, and which is strongly influenced by personal qualities such as perseverance, self-control, and skill in getting along with others and no longer by being smart or by training or expertise. These criteria underline the competencies of emotional intelligence.

Researchers have postulated that emotional intelligence greatly complements an individual's ability to work collaboratively within a team setting, cope with stress, be efficient and lead others (Njah-Joseph, 2017; Njoroge & Oginde, 2019). For instance, leaders who are unable to examine, discern and assess their own emotions may not be able to recognize certain emotional cues from their superiors, co-workers, or subordinates. Likewise, administrators who display poor management over emotions may allow their emotions to interfere with their efficiency in executing their personal and organisational tasks. For instance, when they feel angry, they may inappropriately scold their colleagues or subordinates. Emotional intelligence has been established in literature to be indispensable as regards job performance, personal well-being, work efficiency, positive behaviour, attitudes, and organizational outcomes among others. This paper is therefore poised to find out if university administrators possess emotional intelligence competencies and the influence of demographic variables such as gender, age, and years of experience.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the study.

1. Do university administrators possess the competencies of emotional intelligence?
2. Which competency of emotional intelligence do university administrators possess more?
3. What is the difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to gender?
4. What is the difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to age?
5. What is the difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to years of experience?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated.

1. There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to age.
3. There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to years of experience.

Methodology

The paper adopted a survey research design. This was necessitated by the need to measure the level of emotional intelligence competencies among university administrators and the influence of demographic variables. The population of the study comprised of University Administrators in the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. The sample of the study comprised One hundred and thirteen (113) administrative staff from departments and units affiliated to the Registry Division in University of Benin selected during a lecture on “Emotional Intelligence (EI): a tool for value-adding administrators”, organised by the Management of the University Of Benin, Nigeria, in 2018. One of the authors of this paper, Prof. Azuka Alutu happened to be the guest lecturer. The representative sample was selected after only 113 valid questionnaires were correctly filled and returned out of 200 representing a 56% response rate. Data were collected using a twenty-five (25) item questionnaire tagged “Emotional Intelligence of University Administrators Questionnaire (EIUAQ)” which was adapted from London Leadership Academy (n.d). It has two sections, section A measured the demographic variables of the respondents such as sex, age, years of experience, and status, and section B covered the items on emotional intelligence competencies. The data collected were analysed using mean, frequency, percentage, t-test, and Anova.

Results

Table 1:

The Frequency table showing the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	50	44.2
Female	63	55.8
Total	113	100
Age		
21-40Yrs	64	56.6
41-60 Yrs	49	43.4
Total	113	100
Years of Experience		
5-15 Yrs	87	77.0
16-26 Yrs	20	17.7
27-40 Yrs	6	5.3
Total	113	100
Status		
AA	26	23.0
AO	51	45.1
AR	14	12.4
SAR	16	14.2
PAR	4	3.5
DR	2	1.8
Total	113	100

In Table 1, there is a high percentage (55.8%) of females in comparison to (44.2%) males who responded to the research instrument. This implies that more females are employed in the registry department of the University. The table equally indicates that those within the age of 21-40years percentage (56.6%) compared to 43.4% of those within the ages of 41-60years. This result indicates that the percentage of younger administrators in the registry department is high. In addition, the Table reveals that 77.0% of the respondents were in the range of 5-15years of experience, 17.7% were in the range of 16-26years of experience and 5.3% were in the range of 27-40years of experience. Finally, the table shows a high percentage (45.1%) of administrative officers in comparison to (23.0%) of administrative assistants, 14.2% of Senior Assistant Registrar, 12.4% of Assistant Registrar, 3.5% of Principal Assistant Registrar, and 1.8% of Deputy Registrar.

Research Question 1: Do university administrators possess the competencies of emotional intelligence?

Table 2:

Descriptive of respondents' possession of emotional intelligence competencies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-awareness	113	13.00	20.00	1873.00	16.5752	1.77686
Managing emotions	113	8.00	19.00	1555.00	13.7611	2.01899
Motivating oneself	113	5.00	20.00	1673.00	14.8053	2.20737
Empathy	113	10.00	20.00	1693.00	14.9823	2.12125
Social skills	113	11.00	20.00	1721.00	15.2301	2.03105
Valid N (listwise)	113					

In Table 2, the result indicates that University administrators possess emotional intelligence competencies to an extent. The university administrators possess a high level of emotional intelligence which is indicated by the mean value of 16.6, 15.2, 14.9, 14.8, and 13.7 which represent self-awareness, social skills, empathy, motivating oneself, and managing emotions. These results showed that university administrators are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, can manage their own emotions, can motivate themselves, have empathy for others, and social skills to enhance relationships. The finding agrees with that of Shamsudin, Romle, and Halipah (2015) which revealed that middle-level administrators in public universities have shown quite a high level of emotional intelligence at the workplace. Similarly, Kamassi, Manaf, and Omar (2019) in their study found that the level of EI among administrative staff was high on the total scale scores and its dimensions.

Research Question 2: Which emotional intelligence competencies do university administrators possess more?

Table 3:

Ranking order of possession of emotional intelligence competencies

Competency	Mean	Ranking
Self- Awareness	16.6	1 st
Social Skill	15.2	2 nd
Empathy	14.9	3 rd
Motivating Oneself	14.8	4 th
Managing Oneself	13.7	5 th

In table 3, the university administrators possess the emotional intelligence competency of self-awareness more ($X=16.57$), followed by social skills ($X=15.23$), followed by empathy ($X=14.98$), and motivation oneself ($X=14.80$) while managing emotion is the least possessed ($X=13.76$). Possessing self-awareness competency of emotional intelligence is of great advantage because it is advanced as important for those in managerial positions to understand their strength, motivation, values, goals and be meticulous about their responsibility. The importance of self-awareness was emphasised by the study of Ikpesu (2016) which found it to correlate significantly with administrative behaviour. He added that academic administrators who are aware of their emotions and explore these non-rational elements are more likely to work with others and vigorously pursue their vision. Therefore, the ability to be aware, understand and express themselves, relate with others more acceptably, adapt to change increasingly will enable university administrators to manage emotional, personal-social, and administrative challenges. The significance of self-awareness is supported by the findings of Yusof, Muda and Isha (2016) who found that Counselling Head Teachers (CHT) scored high in the domain of self-awareness namely emotional awareness (88.04%), accurate self-assessment (88.59%), self-confidence (87.86%), and honesty (87.14%). To further support the relevance of self-awareness, Adedokun (2014) carried out a study on emotional intelligence and administrative effectiveness of provosts of federal training centres in Nigeria and found that all the principals used self-awareness in planning and administration of the school system.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to gender.

Table 4:

Descriptive of Emotional Intelligence by gender

	SEX	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EMOTIONAL_INTELLIGENCE	MALE	50	75.7200	6.47772	.91609
	FEMALE	63	75.0635	6.93721	.87401

Table 5:

Independent Samples Test showing Emotional Intelligence by gender

		EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	
		Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F		.006
	Sig.	.936	
t-test for Equality of Means	T	.514	.519
	Df	111	108.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.608	.605
	Mean Difference	.65651	.65651
	Std. Error Difference	1.27623	1.26614
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Lower	-1.87243
		Upper	3.18545
			3.16620

Table 5 shows that the p-value of .936 is greater than the alpha level of .05 ($p > .05$), hence the null hypothesis that says “there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to gender” is hereby accepted. This implies that emotional intelligence among university administrators does not differ with respect to gender. In other words, female and male university administrators possess

the same level of emotional intelligence competencies. This may be attributed to the fact that both gender are exposed to almost the same emotional cues emanating from colleagues and tasks. The findings agree with that of Kumar and Muniandy (2012) who found no significant differences in the level of EI due to gender. However, it disagrees with the study of Kamassi, Manaf, and Omar (2019) which found significant differences with respect to gender in favour of female administrative staff but that of Ghani and Mohd-Zain (2014) revealed significant differences in emotional intelligence with respect to gender in favour of male staff.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to age.

Table 6:

Independent Samples Test showing Emotional intelligence by Age

		EMOTIONAL INTELIIGENCE	
		Equal variances assumed	Equal variances not assumed
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	F	.033	
	Sig.	.856	
t-test for Equality of Means	T	.348	.348
	Df	111	103.929
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.729	.729
	Mean Difference	.44483	.44483
	Std. Error Difference	1.27991	1.27826
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
	Lower	-2.09139	-2.09003
	Upper	2.98105	2.97970

Table 6 showed that the p-value of .856 is greater than the alpha level of .05 ($p > .05$), hence the null hypothesis that says “there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies university administrators with respect to age” is hereby retained. This implies that emotional intelligence among university administrators does

not differ on an age basis. In other words, older and younger university administrators possess the same level of emotional intelligence competencies. In contrast, Kamassi, Manaf, and Omar (2019) found that there are significant differences for administrative staff in favour of more than 50 years old administrative staff. In the same vein, Kumar and Muniandy (2012) revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of Emotional intelligence with respect to age, though, they did not indicate the direction of the difference.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies of university administrators with respect to years of experience.

Table 7:

One-way ANOVA showing emotional intelligence by years of experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	79.222	2	39.611	.876	.419
Within Groups	4972.619	110	45.206		
Total	5051.841	112			

Table 7 showed that the p-value of .419 is greater than the alpha level of .05 ($p > .05$), hence the null hypothesis that says “there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence competencies university administrators with respect to years of experience” is hereby retained. This implies that emotional intelligence among University administrators does not differ with reference to years of experience. In other words, University administrators possess the same level of emotional intelligence competencies irrespective of their years of experience. This result may be attributed to the fact that the administrators are exposed to the same experience such as environmental influences, workshops, seminars, and training as well as responsibilities. Ordinarily, differences in duties, positions, responsibilities, and the level of challenges encountered by the employee in their job could have culminated into the years of experience which should have resulted in a difference in emotional intelligence. The result of this research agrees with that of Jain, Jain and Rastogi (2020) who found that emotional intelligence does not differ concerning the level of experience and that respondents having experience from two to eleven years had almost the same level of emotional intelligence. However, it disagrees with that of Mishra and Das-Mohapatra (2010) who found that there is a significant difference in the values of Emotional Intelligence factors with the more experienced group having higher EI compared to the less experienced group.

Conclusion

The outcome of this study reveals that university administrators possess high emotional intelligence and self-awareness is the most possessed emotional intelligence competency. This indicates that emotional intelligence is important in administrative activities and roles. Therefore, developing emotional intelligence skills provides an administrator with the awareness necessary for meeting the needs of his/her subordinates and creating a climate filled with trust and respect. Universities and other education institutes should strongly consider implementing emotional intelligence development and coaching programs for potential and serving personnel who are in charge of administrative duties. The university management should design a proper appraisal system for its administrators to ease their duties and facilitate better coordination within the organization.

University administrators should build skills in all domains of emotional intelligence to be equipped for a variety of situations involving subordinates, bosses, colleagues, and students, which is becoming more challenging recently. Finally, this current study has some limitations which inform further research activity. One of such is its emphasis on the University of Benin in Nigeria, which is a public university, future research could also include employees from other public and private universities in Nigeria to support the findings of this study and other studies. Longitudinal research can also be carried out to measure administrators' emotional intelligence levels at the beginning of their employment and again at some point in their career to test for significant differences.

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