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# **Individual Variables and Principals' Emotional Management Competencies in Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

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By

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## **Abstract**

*This study sought to examine the principal's emotional management competencies in secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study examined the influence of gender, age and years of experience of principals in the emotional management competencies. Three (3) research questions guided the study. It was a descriptive survey and 382 principals were sampled out of 684 senior school principals that made up the population. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample. 21 item questionnaires was designed by the researcher, and mean statistical tool was used in answering the research questions with the score of 2.5 and above as an accepted factor while below 2.5 are not an acceptable factor in determining the result of the research questions. The result revealed that gender does not influence principal's emotional management competency, but age and years of experience had a position influence in the emotional management competencies of the principals. The researcher recommended that age and years of experience should be considered during the appointment of principals in secondary schools in Rivers state.*

School leadership is inherently and inescapable emotional due to the involving nature of school environment which has placed new demands on educational leaders. As a result of this, educational managers must recognize and assume responsibility not only for students' intellectuals but acquire emotional skills/competencies that will help them achieve success in management of the educational system. According to Beatty (2001), emotions are the embodied knowledge of self that separates and connects, constricts and

releases shapes and reflects the sense of reality and responsibilities. Beatty (2001) urged that it is only when one has emotional perception in the first place can one make use of mood changes and understanding will one have the breath of knowledge necessary to manage and cope with feelings fully. Emotional intelligence competence is needed as powerful tool for the management of diversity and effective school leadership (Kritzenger, 2002). The emotional management competencies are arrays of cognitive capabilities, competences and skills that influence one's ability to succeed and cope with environmental demands and pressures.

The task of the school principals have become increasingly complex in Nigeria particularly in Rivers State School system as they are faced many challenges including kidnapping, cultism, militancy and others because the teachers and students/learners bring a wide array of backgrounds and perspectives to schools. The school leadership is expected to create and sustain conditions that will enable higher learning standards and achieve the goals of secondary school education.

### **Components of Emotional Management Competencies**

Emotional competencies are not innate talents but learned abilities. Emotional intelligence is the bedrock on which emotional competencies are being built. Competencies have unique contribution to making managers more resonant and therefore, more effective (Goleman, 1999). In his opinion, these competencies are vital for every job and leads to superior performance at work. According to Goleman (2002), the emotional competencies shows how much of that potential have translated into on-the-job capabilities". It represents the degree to which an individual is proficient in specific skills and abilities that are built in emotional intelligence and thus, can provide individual increased effectiveness in the work place. Smith (2002) stated that emotional competence is the demonstration of self-efficacy in eliciting social transactions. According to Smith, self-efficacy means that the individual has the capacity and skills to achieve a desired outcome. It is how people can their respond emotionally, yet simultaneously and strategically apply their knowledge about emotions and their emotional competence is integrated with such concepts as sympathy, self-control, fairness and a sense of reciprocity.

Four emotional intelligence components are vital tools for effective management and leadership according to Goleman, Boyatzis and Mokee's study cited in Osuji (2010). These components are:

- i. Self-awareness
- ii. Self-management
- iii. Social-awareness and
- iv. Relationship-management

### **Self-Awareness**

This is an awareness of emotions and the ability to express them verbally in a socially appropriate manner. Self-awareness is the keystone of emotional intelligence on which other components such as self-management, social-awareness and relationship-management are built. Goleman (2002) believed that leaders who are aware of their own emotions are more open to other people's emotions and thrive when working with them. People with this competency are better equipped to handle challenging situations involving other people. Self-awareness consists of the following competencies:

- i. Emotional self-awareness
- ii. Accurate self-assessment
- iii. Self-confidence.

School principal who possesses these competencies tends to do well in the management of their emotions. (Cherniss and Goleman, 2000). They maintained that managers who are self confident know their abilities and believe in their abilities to perform better. Self confidence motivates people to work harder and persist through difficulties (Magoas, 2005). However, Noyes (2011), believed that a person who cannot successfully manage his own emotions cannot successfully manage other people and their emotions. Smith and Cronje (2003) listed emotional competencies indication of self-management as:

- (a) Self-control
- (b) Trustworthiness
- (c) Conscientiousness
- (d) Adaptability
- (e) Achievement drive and
- (f) Initiative.

All these involve the school principal ability to recognize individual differences among staff, making sure that staff motivation, personal development, and delegation of task and authority to competent people to ensure the achievement of the goals of secondary education.

### **Emotional Management Competencies and Gender**

There are limited studies on the effect of emotional intelligence competence of school leadership. Bar-On (1997) in his work discovered that although no difference appeared between males and females regarding overall emotional and social components, there were significant difference for a few factorial components. Females seem to have stronger interpersonal skills than males but males had a higher intrapersonal capacity and have better stress management and adaptability what more specifically, women were more aware of emotions and better able to relate interpersonally and act in a socially responsible way. Men on the other hand, appeared to

have better self regard and are more independent in coping with stress and more optimistic.

Bar-On and parker (2000) in their work found that women did score significantly higher in empathy, interpersonal relationship and social responsibility while men scored higher on self-actualization, stress tolerance, impulse control and adaptability.

Children and Cryer (1999) found out that females have higher level of self-awareness, more service orientated and better communication skills and are more adapted in developing others.

However, Groves (2005) noted that there are gender differences in leaders' social and emotional competencies and the propensity for charismatic and emotional leadership.

### **Emotional Management Competencies and Age**

Unlike IQ, which increase up to ones teen years, emotional intelligence competence seem always to continue to develop (Cook, 2006). As people learn from experiences, their emotional competence grows. Studies that have tracked people's emotion intelligence over the years indicate that people's competencies increase as they grow older. Goleman (2998), Bar-On (2000) found that older group scored higher in the emotional quotient than the younger groups. Individuals in their late forties and early fifties achieved increase with age. The study suggests that emotional and social competencies increase with age (Cook, 2006).

### **Emotional Management Competence and Years of Experience**

Chernis and Goleman (2001) in their work found out that high performance are associated with those experiences on the job and also had significantly higher emotional competence than younger ones. In another report, Cook (2006) in his study of the effects of emotional intelligence of principals leadership performance discovered those years of experience as a variable had no significant effect on emotional intelligence competence of school principals. This work is not in consistent with what Goleman, Boyatzis Mckee (2002) contended that over course of a career, emotional intelligence tends to strengthen.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The effective implementation and realization of the objectives of secondary education are hinged on the effective leadership provided by the administrative head of the secondary schools. The cultural complexity and diversity of Rivers State Secondary Educational system today is demanding greater range of skills and emotional competencies from its leaders for effective management, in order to cope with kidnapping, cultism and militancy in oil producing school communities. Principals are

also to respond to fundamental issues such as lateness to work, absenteeism, truancy among teachers and students, job stress, conflict resolution, ethnic diversity, work ethics among staff members, for which there are no textbooks-solution (Malgas, 2005). Apart from this daily tasks, there are political influences, policies from the Ministry of Education and Post Primary School Board, community influences all put pressures on the principals' emotional dimensions of 'secondary school leadership appear to be neglected in the secondary school system by the educational administration hence, the present study which attempts to determine whether the school principals in rivers state exhibit tendencies that portray them to be emotionally and effectively competent.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine how gender, age and years of experience influence the secondary school principals' emotional management competencies in secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Research Question**

The following research questions guided the study:

- (1) How does gender as a variable influence secondary school principals' emotional management competencies?
- (2) How does age of the principals influence their emotional management competencies?
- (3) How does years of experience influence secondary school principals' emotional management competencies?

### **Method**

The design of the study was a description survey. Population of the study consist of all the 684 secondary school principals senior secondary schools in 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

The sample size for the study was made up of 382 senior secondary school principals in 12 Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique was used in order to ensure the selection is representative of diversity and uniqueness of the population.

### **Research Instruments**

The instrument used for data collection is titled Secondary School principal Emotional Management rating scale (SSPEMRS). It is structured on a four point liker-type scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

SD	-	Strongly agree	4 Points
A	-	Agree	3 Points
DS	-	Disagree	2 Points
SD	-	Strongly disagree	1 Point.

A decision cut off point of 2.50 was adopted. Any item or component in which the respondents have a mean score of 2.50 and this above is regarded as positive and accepted (significant) while the reverse is the case for negative result. (not significant).

The questionnaire was by vetted experts in measurement and evaluation while the reliability coefficient yield an 'r' value of 0.78 score using Pearson moment correlation coefficient with a test retest method on the principal outside the sample used for the study.

**Data analysis procedures** mean score of 2.5 and above as a cut-off point for the acceptance of the result was adopted.

**Research Question 1:** How does gender influence secondary school principals' emotional management competencies?

**Table 1: Mean Perception on How Gender Influence Secondary School Principals' Emotional Management Competence in Rivers State**

S/N	Items of the Instrument	Female	Male	Decision
1.	Principals have self confidence in dealing with people.	3.30	3.18	Accepted
2.	Principals remain calm and focused when they are angered.	2.89	2.96	Accepted
3.	Principal maintain dignity even when faced with difficult situations.	3.000	3.16	Accepted
4.	Principals are concerned about the needs and welfare of staff in their schools.	2.94	3.30	Accepted
5.	Principals are interested in developing the skills and abilities of their subordinate in the school.	2.09	2.28	Accepted
6.	Principal have the ability to influence subordinate to work.	3.23	2.79	Accepted
7.	Principal nurture and build trust among subordinate.	2.19	2.18	Not accepted
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.83</b>	

The result shows that gender does not influence River State Secondary School principals emotional management competencies based on the grand mean perceptions of female principal (2.80) and for male (2.83).

**Research question 2**

How does age of principals influence their emotional management competencies?

**Table 2: Mean Perception of Age on Secondary School Principals Emotional Management Competencies in Rivers State**

S/N	Items of the Instrument	N	30-39 Yrs	40-49 Yrs	50-59 Yrs	60 Yrs and Above	Decision
1.	Principals are cheerful and enjoy working with new ideas.	382	3.33	3.26	2.91	3.83	Accepted
2.	Principals take responsibility for their actions and performance.	382	2.71	2.81	3.01	2.83	Accepted
3.	Despite setbacks and problems, principals continue to work in a project in a calm manner.	382	3.67	2.83	2.98	3.33	Accepted
4.	Principal have the ability to handle change.	382	3.00	3.26	3.09	3.00	Accepted
5.	Principal are aware in the moment when they become angry or offensive.	382	2.67	2.43	2.92	3.00	Accepted
6.	School principals are aware of the feelings of others.	382	3.00	3.00	2.82	3.17	Accepted
7.	Principals listen to opinion of staff before taking decisions.	382	2.00	2.70	2.51	2.83	Not accepted
<b>Grand mean</b>			<b>2.91</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>3.14</b>	

The result here revealed that age of the principals moderately influences their emotional management competencies. The principals within the age brackets of 60 years and above have the highest mean score of 3.14 while those in the age brackets of 40-59 years of age had least mean score of 2.89, 30-39 had 2.91 respectively.

**Research question 3**

How does year of experience influence secondary school principals' emotional management competencies?

**Table 3: Mean Perceptions on Years of Experience Influence on Principals Emotional Management Competence**

S/N	Items of the Instrument	0-10	11-20 Yrs	21-29 Yrs	30yrs and Above
1.	Principals welcome novel ideas and criticism from their subordinates.	1.87	2.30	2.70	3.20
2.	Principals strive to improve the system or raise standard of excellence in the school.	3.29	2.70	3.15	3.75
3.	School principals are punctual to meetings.	2.53	2.60	2.63	3.20
4.	Principals encourage honest and respectful decision in the school.	2.76	3.27	3.45	3.80
5.	The principals have confidence in their ability to 2.45 manage crises.	2.60	2.7	3.01	3.41
6.	School principals resolve conflict promptly.	2.30	2.45	2.60	3.00
7.	Principals are concerned about the needs and welfare in their schools.	2.8	2.71	2.96	3.42

The data in table 3 shows that, years of experience of secondary school principals had a positive influence on the emotional management competencies of those principals having 21 years and above experience with the mean score of 2.96 and 3.42. while those principals having less than 21 years of experience had 2.51 and 2.71 respectively.



### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study revealed that both female and male principals in Rivers State have the capacity or competencies in managing their emotions. Gender does not have any influence in their emotional management competencies.

This result is in agreement with the work of Cook (2006), which found out that gender of the principals had no significant effects on their emotional intelligences competencies. Again Goleman (1995) and Bar-On (1997) also observed that both male and female principals demonstrate a high level of emotional competencies in leading their school which enhances their leadership performance in the State.

On the influence of age on the emotional management competencies of secondary school principals in Rivers State, the result revealed that some of the principals have a moderate influence on the emotional management competencies in school leadership. The finding collaborates with Bar-On (2002), and Goleman (1998), who found out that emotional and social competencies of leaders increase with age. This implies that the older the principals, the more emotional competent he becomes in school leadership as shown by the mean perception of those in age brackets of 60 years and above.

However, the years of experience as a principal showed significant differences in the emotional management competencies of secondary school principals in River State. This result disagrees with Cook (2002) but in line with Goleman, Boyatzis and Mickee (202 that over a course of a year, emotional intelligence competencies tends to increase and strengthen.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the more experienced secondary school principals are on the job, the higher the emotional management competencies they exhibit in school leadership.

### **Conclusion**

Principals in secondary schools in Rivers state are rated to have emotional management competencies needed for effective school leadership. Although age and years of experience were seen to have positive influence on principal's emotional management competencies, hence should be considered during the appointment of school principals.

### **Recommendation**

Arising from the result of this study, are the following recommendations:

1. Emotional intelligence test and training should be administered to school principals before recruitment and job placement.

2. The age and years of experience of principals should be considered during appointments and posting of principals to secondary schools.

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