

**INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON  
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: AMONG SPECIAL NEEDS  
EDUCATION TEACHERS IN ABUJA NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** The significance of well-being among educators is paramount, as it directly influences their effectiveness in teaching and their overall quality of life. It is against this background that this study examined the influence of emotional intelligence on the psychological well-being of special needs education teachers in the FCT. Abuja – Nigeria. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design using a Proportionate sampling technique to select 159 participants from the following four schools: Centre for Children with Special Needs (CCSN), Hope House initiative, Sunset Speech and Language Resource Centre, and Blooming Heritage School. Ryff Brief Psychological Well-being (1989) Scale, Emotional Intelligence Wong and Law (2002) Scales were employed. Descriptive and inferential statistics of Linear Regression were used to test the hypothesis. The results show that emotional intelligence significantly influences psychological well-being ( $F(1,157) = 7.882$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) with  $R = 0.219$ ,  $R^2 = 0.048$ . The hypothesis was accepted in the study. It was concluded that emotional intelligence (EI) significantly influenced psychological well-being among special needs education, and it was recommended that there is an urgent need for the development of intervention programmes aimed at increasing the emotional intelligence level of special education needs teachers.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Well-being and Special Needs Education Teachers.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, numerous studies have emerged that seek to explore the impact of teachers' emotional intelligence on their well-being (Orozco et al., 2020). The significance of well-being among educators is paramount, as it directly influences their effectiveness in teaching and their overall quality of life (Turluic & Balcan, 2023). Well-being has been recognised as a critical element in shaping teachers' identities, the range of emotions they encounter, and their sense of belonging within their professional organisations (Hofstadler et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2021; Nazari & Xodabande, 2022). Ensuring optimal well-being is crucial for fostering teachers' resilience in challenging situations, as it enhances their ability to manage stress, make informed decisions under pressure, and maintain effective team dynamics (Jones & Fear, 2019). Some scholars equate "psychological well-being" with concepts such as happiness, satisfaction, subjective well-being, and overall quality of life (Lucas-Mangas, 2020). Emphasizing the psychological well-being of

teachers is not merely an ethical obligation but also a strategic necessity for enhancing teaching effectiveness and protecting the health and preparedness of educators (Flood & Keegan, 2022).

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the psychological well-being of educators working in special needs education, primarily due to ongoing challenges that threaten their mental health. These challenges encompass heavy workloads, lack of adequate resources, insufficient facilities, the complexities of addressing the diverse needs of special needs students, minimal involvement in decision-making processes, psychological distress, emotional strain (Faremi et al., 2019), and unstable emotional expressions. Psychological well-being is influenced by interpersonal relationships, job satisfaction, and professional achievements and is linked to happiness, satisfaction, subjective well-being, and quality of life as perceived by teachers on an individual basis (Tous-Pallarés et al., 2022). The capacity to perceive, comprehend, regulate, and express emotions effectively is increasingly acknowledged as a vital component in fostering psychological resilience and adaptive functioning in high-stress environments (Brackett & Salovey, 2021). The unique challenges and stressors that educators encounter significantly impact their psychological well-being, particularly in relation to their perceptions of their profession. Teachers are recognized as vital architects of a robust nation, with their contributions deemed both timeless and noble as they strive to impart knowledge to every student within their reach. Their role is instrumental in shaping the future of societies and civilisations. Nevertheless, the teaching profession is laden with responsibilities. Given the distinct challenges and psychological well-being associated with teaching special needs students, it is crucial to examine the psychological well-being of these educators and the role that emotional intelligence plays in sustaining it.

Furthermore, several emerging concepts may significantly influence teacher identity, cognition, and performance. One such concept that has received less attention is teacher work experience, which is defined as “a two-factored, non-cognitive skill encompassing perseverance and passion” (McCain, 2017). Additionally, teaching experience is another critical factor in teacher professionalism that has been extensively studied, as it can affect teachers’ classroom management strategies and the overall teaching-learning dynamic (Tsui, 2009). It has consistently been crucial for teacher educators to investigate the distinctions between novice and experienced teachers across multiple dimensions.

The research conducted by Fu et al. (2021) examined the Emotional Intelligence and psychological Well-Being of Special Education Teachers in China. The findings indicated that (1) Emotional Intelligence (EI) and work engagement were positively correlated with the well-being of special education teachers, and (2) work engagement served as a mediating factor between EI and the well-being of these educators. The study involved 496 special education teachers from China, with data gathered online via questionnaires distributed across 67 special education institutions in five provinces of Mainland China. The research utilised the EI scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) in conjunction with the General Well-Being Scale, a standardised assessment tool created by the National Centre for Health Statistics to measure subjective well-being. This scale was later revised by Duan in 1996. Ultimately, 496 valid questionnaires were obtained, resulting in a recovery rate of 97.64%.

A study by Gayathri and Christi (2023) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and the psychological well-being of employees. The findings indicate a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. Employees exhibiting higher levels of emotional intelligence are likely to possess superior coping mechanisms and maintain more optimistic outlooks. Furthermore, these individuals tend to foster better interpersonal relationships and receive greater social support, which can significantly contribute to their overall psychological well-being. This relationship highlights the importance of developing emotional intelligence skills to promote mental health and overall well-being. The study reported a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.784, indicating good reliability. Correlation tests confirmed the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. Data was collected through a questionnaire administered to employees at JBM Neel Metal Products Ltd in Hosur. The questionnaire was designed in English as the primary language, with Tamil included as an additional language to facilitate comprehension among employees. The research employed closed-ended questions, utilising a standardised instrument with a Likert scale to assess emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. The Likert scale assigned values as follows: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Abimbola et al. (2022) conducted research on emotional intelligence and psychological well-being and found that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of psychological well-being.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is evident that special education teachers experience some of the lower levels of psychological well-being within the teaching profession. This lower level of psychological well-being arises from a significant workload and emotional or psychological pressures, particularly when working with students who face challenges such as speech impairments, cognitive difficulties, physical disabilities, psychiatric conditions, or behavioural disorders. The frustration that teachers encounter further exacerbates the demands of their roles, leading some to seek alternative career paths for greater job satisfaction outside the realm of special education. Moreover, the psychological well-being of these educators is a crucial yet frequently neglected aspect of their professional experience. Daily interactions with students and colleagues, coupled with the unique demands of special education, often result in various emotional challenges and psychological pressures that may contribute to a low level of psychological well-being. The field of special education encompasses not only a profession but also a profound responsibility for the development of individuals and the management of the current educational system. Furthermore, factors such as emotional intelligence can influence psychological well-being, with special needs educators and those possessing greater experience likely benefiting from more effective coping strategies and support networks (Koeske & Koeske, 2012).

However, there exists a paucity of research investigating the influence of emotional intelligence, occupational stress, and psychological well-being in Nigeria. They affect emotional intelligence and can significantly impact psychological well-being. Gaining an understanding of these dynamics could yield important insights for the formulation of targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the well-being of teachers in special needs education. Although extensive literature connects emotional intelligence and psychological well-being, work experience remains inadequately examined, revealing a notable gap in research within the Nigerian context, where

cultural, social, and psychological elements may distinctly shape the experiences of special needs educators.

Therefore, this study investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on psychological well-being among special needs education teachers in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Nigeria, and how this factor influences their psychological well-being. By addressing this gap, the study aims to provide valuable insights for professionals, policymakers, and support organisations to develop effective strategies and support systems for special needs teachers, ultimately enhancing the overall psychological well-being of both teachers and their students.

### **Research Questions**

For the purpose of this study, the following research question is formulated to answer the issues around the research problems.

1. What is the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on the psychological well-being (PWB) of special needs education teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

### **Aim and Objective of the Study**

This study examined the influence of emotional intelligence on psychological well-being among special needs education teachers in FCT. Abuja – Nigeria.

The specific objective of this study is as follows:

- i. To examine the influence of Emotional intelligence (EI) on the psychological well-being (PWB) among special needs education teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

## **METHOD**

### **Design**

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to achieve its objectives in the target region. This method was employed to investigate the impact of emotional intelligence on the psychological well-being of special needs teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. Additionally, it is suitable for evaluating the research that was conducted. It also enables the researcher to gather evidence to verify the issues as regards this study. In this study, the independent variable of interest was emotional intelligence, while the dependent variable of interest in this study was psychological well-being.

### **Participants**

One hundred and fifty-nine participants (159) were drawn from these 4 Schools: Centre for Children with Special Needs (CCSN), Hope House initiative, Centre for Children with Special Needs, Sunset Speech and Language Resource Centre, and Blooming Heritage School from the

information gotten from the authorities of these establishments, the following are the figures of special needs teachers in these establishments Blooming heritage school (N=75), Sunset speech and language resource centre (N=85), Centre for Children with Special Needs (N=56), Hope House (N=49), Therefore, the total population was 265 male and female people from special need schools in FCT Abuja and 159 participants were sampled for this study according to the following criteria.

### **Inclusion Criteria**

- i. All the special needs teachers, both in special needs centres and in inclusive schools, who teach peculiar children.
- ii. Only the special needs teachers who were willing and available to participate in the study.

### **Exclusion criteria**

- i. Those without a direct care role with these children did not participate in the study.

### **Sampling Size/ Sampling Technique**

A total of 265 samples were sampled using the Yamane (1967) sample size calculation formula. The Yamane formula was given as

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N(e)^2)}$$

n = Sample size. N = The population under study (265). e = Margin error (0.05)

$$n = \frac{265}{(1 + 265(0.05)^2)}$$

$$n = 265 / (1 + 265 \times (0.0025))$$

$$n = 265 / (1 + 0.6625)$$

$$n = 265 / 1.6625$$

$$n = 159.3984$$

$$= 159$$

The sample size is, therefore, 159 (this represents the number of questionnaires that were administered to participants).

Proportionate sampling was used to select participants. Proportionate sampling was used to ensure the representativeness of the sample, facilitate subgroup analyses, enhance statistical power,

enable meaningful comparisons, and capture the heterogeneity of the target population, thereby strengthening the validity and generalizability of the research findings.

### **Instruments**

The study instruments consisted of two standardised psychological scales, namely: (i) Brief Psychological Well-being Scale (ii) Emotional Intelligence Scale; overall, it is made up of four sections (A-D), which include (A) Demographic Information, (B) Brief Psychological Well-being Scale, (C) Emotional Intelligence Scale.

**Section B: Ryff Brief Psychological Well-Being Scale (1989):** The Brief Psychological Well-Being Scale (BPWB) was developed by Ryff (1995). It consists of 18 items that measure the six dimensions of human positive functioning. These are Autonomy, Purpose in Life, Positive Relations with Others, Personal Growth, Environmental Mastery, and Self-Acceptance. Participants rated their responses on a 6-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Mefon et al. (2016) established the appropriateness of the instrument on Nigerian samples with an alpha coefficient of .72 for self-acceptance, .50 for positive relation, .46 for autonomy, .60 for environmental mastery, .62 for purpose in life, and .57 for personal growth. A Cronbach alpha internal consistency of .65 was established for the overall scale of psychological well-being in this study. High scores signify that respondents view themselves in very positive terms in diverse areas of functioning.

**Section C: Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002):** The Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002) is a 16-item scale designed as a brief measure of emotional intelligence for use in organisational research. It measures four dimensions (Self emotion appraisal, emotion appraisal of others, use of emotion and regulation of emotion). Wong & Law (2002) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .93 as an index of the scale's internal consistency. All items related to emotional intelligence were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Chinese (2014), in a pilot study involving 86 staff members of the Nigeria Police Force, Oji River Area Command, obtained a Cronbach's Alpha of .77, with a mean of 50.90, a standard deviation of 8.52, and a variance of 72.53. In addition, the researchers obtained a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of 0.80 in a pilot study using undergraduate students from the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. A high score on this scale indicates a high level of emotional intelligence, while a low score indicates a low level of emotional intelligence.

### **Procedure**

A letter of introduction was obtained from the Department of Psychology and was taken to the listed schools where the research was conducted by the researcher to seek permission from the authorities in the school. Thereafter, the researcher obtained the informed consent of each participant approached. Following the informed consent and willingness to take part in the research, an instrument comprising three psychological scales was administered to the participants individually. All participants were informed on the purpose of the study and be required to fill out the questionnaires honestly. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions, especially

after the study, to address any misconceptions. All participants were treated in accordance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA).

After all participants are done answering and have returned the questionnaires to the researcher. Questionnaires without error were computed and scores were analysed and interpreted using the appropriate statistical package (SPSS version 28).

### **Statistical Technique Used**

Data collected from the self-report questionnaires were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of the participants with a summary of the distribution of scores of emotional intelligence on psychological well-being. Descriptive statistics were used including measures of central tendency, such as mean and median, and measures of variability, such as standard deviation. Inferential statistics were used to test hypotheses and to examine the relationships between the variables being studied. The following statistical tests were used in this study:

Linear regression was used to test Hypotheses one and two. This test allowed the researcher to determine the influence of independent variable on dependent variable the influence of Emotional Intelligent on the psychological well-being of special needs teachers in FCT Abuja Nigeria.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants were informed about the objectives of the research through the brief introduction contained in the Google form questionnaire. This enabled the researcher to get their consent and cooperation to make them participate willingly. Participants was not deceived or forced into participation. All the participants were treated with dignity as humans and assured them of their anonymity and confidentiality of any information given. Ethical principles:

**Informed Consent:** After briefing the participants about the objectives of the study, the researcher sought the informed consent of the participants for the administration of the questionnaire to them.

**Voluntary Participation:** The study gave the participants full prospect to participate in the study voluntarily without being forced or pressured.

**Confidentiality:** Participants were assured of their confidentiality and right to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences against them. However, there was a limitation attached to the level of confidentiality if a patient was found to constitute a threat or cause harm to any teacher in general.

**Beneficence:** The benefits of the study to the participants were discussed in terms of sharing information related to the purpose of the research with the participants.

**Risk Management:** The participants were informed that the study does not constitute any physical harm to them.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	60	37.7
Female	99	62.3
<b>Marital status</b>		
Singe	52	32.7
Married	107	67.3
<b>Years of experience</b>		
1 - 7	81	50.9
8 - 14	57	35.8
15 - 21	17	10.7
22 - 28	4	2.5

The result in Table 1 above shows socio-demographic characteristics. A greater percentage, 99 (62.3%), were males. The majority of the participants, 107 (67.3%), were married. The majority of participants, 81 (50.9%), had 1-7 years of experience.

**Test of Hypothesis:** Emotional intelligence (EI) will have a significant influence on the psychological well-being of special needs teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

**Table 2: Standard linear regression showing the influence of emotional intelligence on psychological well-being**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>t-test</b>	<b>p - value</b>
<b>Psychological Well-being</b>						
Constant					13.29	0.000
Emotional Intelligence	0.219	0.048	7.882	0.219	2.808	0.006

Standard linear regression was conducted to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on psychological well-being among special needs education teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The result shows that emotional intelligence influences psychological well-being significantly ( $F_{(1,157)} = 7.882$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) with  $R = 0.219$ ,  $R^2 = 0.048$ . Thus, emotional intelligence contributed positively and accounted for 4.8% of the variance in psychological well-being. With this result, the hypothesis which states that Emotional Intelligence (EI) will have a significant influence on the psychological well-being of special needs teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria, is hereby confirmed.

## **DISCUSSION**

The objective of this study is to examine the influence of emotional intelligence, occupational stress on psychological well-being; while investigating on how marital status and work experience moderate these variables to influence the psychological well-being of special needs education teachers in FCT. Abuja – Nigeria.

The hypothesis stated that Emotional intelligence (EI) will have a significant influence on the psychological well-being of special needs teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. With this result, the hypothesis shown in Table 1, which states that Emotional Intelligence (EI) will have a significant influence on the psychological well-being of special needs teachers in FCT Abuja, Nigeria, is hereby confirmed. In accordance with previous studies, the research conducted by Fu et al. (2021) examined the Emotional Intelligence and psychological Well-Being of Special Education Teachers in China. The findings indicated that (1) Emotional Intelligence (EI) and work engagement were positively correlated with the well-being of special education teachers, and (2) work engagement served as a mediating factor between EI and the well-being of these educators. The study involved 496 special education teachers from China, with data gathered online via questionnaires distributed across 67 special education institutions in five provinces of Mainland China. The research utilized the EI scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) alongside the General Well-Being Scale, a standardized assessment tool created by the National Centre for Health Statistics to measure subjective happiness. This scale was later revised by Duan in 1996. Ultimately, 496 valid questionnaires were obtained, resulting in a recovery rate of 97.64%.

A study by Gayathri and Christi (2023) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and the psychological well-being of employees. The findings indicate a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. Employees exhibiting higher levels of emotional intelligence are likely to possess superior coping mechanisms and maintain more optimistic outlooks. Furthermore, these individuals tend to foster better interpersonal relationships and receive greater social support, which can significantly contribute to their overall psychological well-being. This relationship underscores the necessity of cultivating emotional intelligence skills to enhance mental health and well-being. The study reported a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.784, indicating good reliability. Correlation tests confirmed the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. Data was collected through a questionnaire administered to employees at JBM Neel Metal Products Ltd in Hosur. The questionnaire was designed in English as the primary language, with Tamil included as an additional language to facilitate comprehension among employees. The research utilized closed-ended questions, employing a standardized instrument with a Likert scale to assess emotional intelligence and psychological well-being. The Likert scale assigned values as follows: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Abimbola et al. (2022) conducted research on emotional intelligence and psychological well-being and found that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of psychological well-being.

Evaluating the psychological well-being (PWB) of teachers is essential for safeguarding their mental health and fostering an environment conducive to their professional and personal growth.

This assessment is also vital for promoting effective teacher-student relationships, which can significantly influence students' self-efficacy, social skills, and overall mental health.

## **Conclusion**

The study investigated the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on psychological well-being among special needs education. At the end of the study, it explicitly showed that emotional intelligence (EI) influences psychological well-being among special needs educators. Thus, the ability to effectively deal with emotions and emotional information in schools would assist teachers in managing their psychological well-being. If emotional intelligence skills (Empathy, impulse control) are increased in teachers, they would be more effective in handling their feelings and hence directly reduce the level of stress in them. This could indirectly protect their health and psychological well-being.

## **Recommendations**

At the end of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. This study's results indicated an urgent need for the development of intervention programmes aimed at increasing teachers' emotional intelligence and better maintaining their psychological well-being.
2. More so, emotional intelligence scales should be used as an instrument in the selection and recruitment of special needs education teachers. This could improve the predictive validity of the selection method.

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