

Effects of Emotional Intelligence Programmes on School Engagement among Senior Secondary School Students in Abia State, Nigeria

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>The study examined the effects of Emotional Intelligence programmes on school engagement among selected senior secondary school students in Abia State, Nigeria. Thus, the study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. Adopting a quasi-experimental design which includes pretest post-test control. The study employed a multistage sampling technique to select a total of 40 SS2 students out of the population of 3,238 (1,637 males and 1,601 females) identified with low levels of school engagement in government secondary schools in Abia State. Two instruments were developed by the researcher as School Engagement Identification Scale (SEIS) and Emotional Intelligence Training Package (EI). Three experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, and Measurement and Evaluation from the College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State validated face content of the instrument. Reliability of the instruments was established using test-retest procedures among SS2 Students with low school engagement in Secondary Technical School Amandugba, Isu LGA, Imo State. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was 0.82 and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation stability coefficient was 0.83. The instrument was given in three phases with the help of two teacher-counsellors. Descriptive statistics in the form of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, whereas inferential statistical analyses required to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance were completed through Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Results indicated that the Emotional Intelligence training programme had a significant positive impact on students' involvement in school when compared to the control group, and that no gender difference existed between mean scores for boys and girls who received this programme. Overall, the results suggested that teachers should perceive and respond to classroom emotions in all students regardless of whether they are boys or girls.</i> Key Words: Psychological Capital Programmes, School Engagement Senior Secondary School Students.
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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited. Citation: Kenneth, Blessing Chidera, Rose Ngozi Uzoka, & Jonas Ejike Uroko. (2026). Effects of emotional intelligence programmes on school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State, Nigeria. UKR Journal of Education and Literature, 2(4), 153-160.	

Introduction

Education has been recognised as a veritable instrument for national development since it brings about widespread literacy, public awareness and great changes in the social, political and economic life of a nation. So, policymakers, professionals and educational authorities worldwide are striving to improve student participation in schools (Akuma & Tefera, 2022). According to Saracosti et al. (2019) school involvement is defined as the student's participation in the educational process. According to this study school

engagement refers to active participation in guided learning experiences and planned learning outcomes that are formulated through systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school for the overall wilful growth in personal-social competencies of the students.

School engagement is a multi-factorial construct that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects (Okeoma et al., 2024). Cognitive engagement: The

intentional process students undergo when they take on complex ideas and learn difficult skills. Affective engagement has to do with students emotional responses to skills- or lessons-based tasks, most notably their attitudes and reactions and feeling about school, academic subjects and non-academic activities, teachers, peers and so on. However, behavioural engagement represents students active involvement in academic and extra-curricular aspects of the school setting (Fredrick et al. in Estevez et al., 2021).

Basically, Fredricks *et al.* (2019) identified three profiles of students with low level of school engagement as the cognitively disengaged, the affectively disengaged and the behaviourally disengaged. The cognitively disengaged fail to make conscious effort to develop their cognitive abilities and skills such as attention, memory, problem solving skills and learning strategies. The affectively disengaged exhibit a negative attitude and reaction towards schooling and stakeholders in the school. On the other hand, the behaviourally disengaged fail to participate in the school programmes and activities.

The researchers, who have spent several years working in Abia State, noted that it appears school engagement among senior secondary school students in the state is becoming lower. Many of those students reportedly skip class and other school functions. A good percentage of the students could be seen roaming around, in and about the school premises loitering under trees, hiding in bushes moving extensively on mobile phones engaged in such activities as internet fraud among other vices. Some with SLTs which have resorted to pay for sports betting, WhatsApp and Facebook activities, others use this as an opportunity during school hours when they were supposed to take part in academic programmes to binge watch pornographic videos. Low levels of Engagement in School Activities, which refer to the students' participation in activities with school staff and other classmates is a factor that may hinder the academic performance of learners. Academic Achievement is a key educational outcome reflecting the extent to which an individual, usually referred to as a learner, has achieved their educational goals.

According to Okeoma, Unachukwu and Okeke (2024), academic achievement of senior secondary school students in external examinations keep revealing that students are struggling with school engagement. Udeh (2025), citing Test Development Division, West African Examination Council, Lagos gave a summary of WAEC achievements beginning from 1991-2021. For instance, as quoted by the author, in 2017, the total number of students with (D7-F9) was 547,665 representing 40.78%, in 2018, the number was 786,380 representing 50.02%; in 2019 the number was 569,654 representing 35.82%; in 2020 the number was

1,513,954 representing 60.18%; and in 2021 the number was 299,065 representing 18.30%. Here, one could observe the fluctuations in the performance of Nigerian students. These fluctuations extend across various states of the country including Abia State.

This study focused on school engagement as a factor of academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Abia State. According to Owolabi and Owolabi (2024), student engagement positively influences the retention of academic knowledge, which is crucial in enabling students to graduate within their expected timeframe. The authors explain that actively engaged students learn from both planned and spontaneous learning activities. Research by Maamin et al. (2025), also cited by Michael and Michelle, describes more privacy" from Jane's email address--their personal business model for profit sharing between participators in the technology project on behalf of their stepchild that has been a part of the mediation game since June. Balanced Latent Representation Learning: Meert al. (2015), and Dyer (2018) found that students engaged at school had better academic and psychosocial outcomes in seniors.

Secondary school students are those learners attending institutions providing education after the primary level (Bridges, 2017). Senior secondary school or high school students are typically aged 16 to 18 years and are in the last phase of the course. Nevertheless, there is a perception that students in the Nigerian secondary school system have little or no school engagement. Detoro et al. (2023), Lara et al. (2021), and Saracostti et al. In a qualitative focused group study (2019), Anderson et al. Factors at the personal level, such as learning disabilities, intellectual challenges in school to deal with external stressors, low motivation or lack of self-efficacy and helplessness also have a significant bearing on poor reasons for disengagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State.

The significance of school engagement has led the government, teachers and other stakeholders in education to embark on proactive measures for active student participation in schools. Take Dr. Alex Chioma Otti whose administration in Abia State has put forth a number of initiatives to boost school engagement, from the Abia Fostering Innovation and Reform for School Transformation (FIRST) education programme to improved checks on learning outcomes within schools. This programme sought to enhance school infrastructure while also aiming for better teacher education and training, recruitment of strong human resource professionals in schools, and so forth and alongside better salary of teachers across the state, proposes national level digital learning platforms. According to Ofurum et al. These incentives were designed to entice better teachers and encourage them

to teach students in a more effective way - providing extra pay for teachers at low-performing schools (2025) and Ukandu, an incentive-based after-school program aimed at high school students with aspirations of going to college.

In spite of these interventions, Okeoma et al. Notably (2024) noted the persistence of low school engagement among senior secondary school students, which has been well captured in widespread literature on the neglect of talking by teachers and government to eagerly improve student participation in teaching and learning activities. Therefore, the authors highlighted the importance of identifying factors that could enhance students engagement in school. An example of a factor is Emotional Intelligence programmes, which can assist pupils with the comprehension and management of their emotions, improve social relationships and enable further active participation in academic work and school activities.

Emotional intelligence programme is a training course specifically designed to assist students towards understanding and managing their own emotions as well as the emotions of others for the purpose of improving their social and communication skills for a high level of school engagement. In the opinion of Bakhare in Paltiasina, Zamakhsari and Italim (2024), Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand and manage self-emotion and that of others. According to Bakhare, it helps to improve students' communication, reduces conflicts and enhances co-operation within the context of education.

In this study, emotional intelligence could be regarded as the ability of students to understand themselves and their environment in relation to their feelings, moods, attitudes and that of others followed by utilizing the knowledge to make adaptations to their school environment to improve school engagement. Studies conducted by Gkintoni *et al.* (2025), Bereded, Abebe and Negasi (2025), Pattiasina, *et al.* (2024) all indicated a positive and significant effect of EI on students' engagement and overall well-being. Additionally, Bereded, Abebe and Negasi (2025) noted that EI is important in maintaining positive attitude and fostering school engagement among students. Students who have higher levels of EI could have increased effort, attention and persistence as well as effective completion of academic task when compared to those who lack the EI skills. Goleman (1995), identified five major skills or components of emotional intelligence as; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills.

Self-awareness is the students' personal knowledge and understanding of their psychological makeups in relation to their abilities strengths and weaknesses which to an extent could positively or negatively influence their school engagement. Self-regulation is the tendency of the students to control their impulses and behaviours to enhance school

engagement. Motivation is anything within the students that propels them to be willing to engage in the school programmes. Empathy is the ability of the students to understand other students from their internal frame of reference which is usually reflected in the way they understand and share their emotions in the exact way it affects them. Social skill is the ability of the students to effectively communicate and interact with others for a high level of school engagement. In this study, these emotional intelligence skills were incorporated as a training programme to educate the students on strategies to have a better self-understanding and the understanding of others for a better school engagement. Researchers such as; Bereded *et al.* (2015), Barragan *et al.* (2021) reported among others that Emotional Intelligence had direct and positive relationship with students' academic engagement. Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham, in Bairwa and Yadav, (2025) students with high level of Emotional Intelligence tend to display better classroom behaviour, improve problem-solving abilities and more resilient response to academic setbacks.

Another variable that may affect the student's level of emotional intelligence and school engagement could be gender. Gender is considered as a moderator variable in this study hence the effects emotional intelligence training programmes might be different for both males and females. The concept of gender was defined by Eze (2023), as personality traits, behaviours, values, influences, roles and experiences the society expects from both sexes (male and female). In the context of this study, gender could be regarded as the interrelationship among biological, psychological and social factors that shape students' behaviours, identities, experiences and school engagements in relation to being male or female. Several studies have indicated gender differences in school engagement among the students as well as the extent of their development emotional intelligence skills. For instance, a study conducted by Ronnel (2016), indicated that boys had negative attitude towards schooling.

However, despite the importance of EI and the effect of gender on school engagement among senior secondary school students, within the researchers' knowledge, there is no study on the effects of EI programmes on school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State with gender as a moderator variable. Naheed *et al.* (2025), Ngodi *et al.* (2020) and Joshi and Dutta (2014) found from their respective studies that female students had superior school engagement than the male students if exposed to emotional intelligence programmes. Again, Siswanto *et al.* (2024) reported that girls are more emotional in their behaviour or attributes than their male counterparts.

Statement of the Problem

An ideal educational condition favours the full engagement of adolescents in school, because students in senior secondary school in Abia State are expected to not only attend classes regularly and participate actively, but also cope with experiences in academic work, stay focused when lessons are being delivered, complete class exercises and assignments punctually, show interests or strive towards making efforts to balance competition among peers regarding sports as well as guidance programmes at school so that they have a feeling of belongingness. Students should also have sufficient emotional intelligence skills which would lead to their academic success and school experience.

The reality in most secondary schools across Abia State is far from this ideal. A lot of students have poor engagement at school, expressed by coming late to school, inconsistent attending classes, bad results academically, lack of motivation and disinterest in anything that has to do with the school experience; such as tests or learning in general. Instead of getting involved in school based programme some indulge themselves in unproductive but non-school activities like risky sexual behaviour, internet fraud, sports gambling, stealing and drug misuse or Internet dependence which may negatively impact their academic performance in particular and their well-being at large. And this fear of failure could also push some students to resort to examination malpractice and other vile acts in order to pass the exams. Some other causes of school disengagement may be lack of proper infrastructure, teacher attitude, unmotivating teaching methods, boring subject matter and environment conducive to learning.

This disparity between the level of school engagement one would want and the actual closest situations among secondary school students at an expensive stage of need makes it imperative, examining the effects of psychological capital programmes on senior secondary two students ' school engagement in Abia State.

Purpose Of The Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the effects of emotional intelligence programmes on school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to emotional intelligence programmes and control at post-test.
2. Ascertain the gender difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to

emotional intelligence programmes and control at post-test.

Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions were answered.

1. What is the difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to emotional intelligence programmes and control at post-test?
2. What is the gender difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to emotional intelligence programmes and control at post-test?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁. The difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to emotional intelligence programmes and control at posttest is not significant.

HO₂. There is no significant gender difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to emotional intelligence programmes and control at post-test

Methods

A quasi-experimental design with a pretest, posttest and control group. The research adopted a multistage sampling design to select 40 SS2 students from a population of 3,238 (1,637 males and 1,601 females) with low school engagement in government secondary schools in Abia State. The researcher created two: the Scale of School Engagement Identification Scale (SEIS), and Emotional Intelligence (EI) Training Package. Face validation of the instrument was done by three experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Measurement and Evaluation from the College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike Abia State. Measurements in this study include an instrument on students school engagement, which was administered twice (later) to find out the test-retest reliability of the instrument among SS2 students with low school engagement at Secondary Technical School Amandugba, Isu LGA, Imo State. Cronbach's alpha provided an internal consistency coefficient of 0.82 whereas the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) resulted in a stability coefficient of 0.83. Instructions regarding the nature of items and rating pattern for using the instrument were provided to two teacher-counsellors who acted as research assistants during three phases of its administration. The aims of the study were addressed with the aid of mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while null

hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

Results

The results from the data analysis done were presented in the tables below:

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional intelligence programmes and control

Groups	N	Pretest		Posttest		Mean gain scores
		$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Emo. Int	10	2.28	0.83	3.77	0.95	1.49
Control	10	2.23	0.91	2.48	0.87	0.25
Difference						1.24

Emo. Int. = Emotional Intelligence

Data in Table 1 revealed that the students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes had a pre-test school engagement mean score of 2.28 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.83 and a post-test of 3.77 with a standard deviation of 0.95. Similarly, the results also showed that students in the control group had pre-test school engagement mean score of 2.23 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.91 and posttest school engagement mean score of 2.48 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.87. The students in the Emotional Intelligence group had a school engagement mean gain of 1.49 while those in the control group had school engagement mean gain of 0.25. The data showed that the difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control group at posttest is 1.24. This however implies that the students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes had higher mean gain of 1.24 over

Research Question 1

What is the difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control group at posttest?

their counterpart in the control group at posttest. This suggested that Emotional Intelligence training programmes enhanced the school engagement of students than the control group. The standard deviation of the two groups (Emotional Intelligence programmes and Control) at post-test which were 0.95 and 0.87 respectively, indicated that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from each other in their scores which added further validity to the mean.

A corresponding hypothesis that addressed the research question is

Hypothesis 1

The difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control at posttest is not significant.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control at posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2237.915 ^a	2	1118.958	155.519	.000
Intercept	186.209	1	186.209	25.880	.000
Pretest	1385.627	1	1385.627	192.581	.000
Group	15.698	1	15.698	2.182	.023
Error	129.517	18	7.195		
Total	53776.000	20			
Corrected Total	57730.966	19			

Table 2 shows that a significant Probability (P)-value of 0.023 was obtained. Since the Probability-value of 0.023 is less than 0.05 alpha value, the null hypothesis of no significant effect was rejected. Therefore, the difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control at posttest is significant.

Research Question 2

What is the gender difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control at posttest?

Table 3: Pretest and Posttest school engagement mean scores of male and female students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control

Gender	Pretest			Post test		Mean gain scores
	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Male	6	2.27	0.86	3.73	0.94	1.46
Female	4	2.29	0.91	3.81	0.97	1.52
Difference						0.06

Data in Table 3 showed the school engagement mean scores of male and female students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes. The results showed that male students exposed to Emotional intelligence programmes had a pre-test school engagement mean score of 2.27 with a standard deviation of 0.86 while the posttest school engagement mean score was 3.73 with standard deviation of 0.94 while the female students had a pre-test school engagement mean score of 2.29 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.91 with posttest school engagement mean score of 3.81 with corresponding standard deviation of 0.97. The result revealed that the male students had school engagement mean gain score of 1.46 while their female counterpart had school engagement mean gain score of 1.52. This however implies that the female students

exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes had a slight higher school engagement mean gain score of 0.06 over their male counterpart. This suggested that the use of Emotional Intelligence programmes slightly enhanced the school engagement of female students than the male students.

A corresponding hypothesis that addressed the research question is:

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant gender difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control at posttest.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on school engagement mean scores of male and female students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2234.125 ^a	2	1117.063	43.035	.000
Intercept	110.504	1	110.504	4.257	.000
Pretest	2502.200	1	2502.200	96.398	.000
Gender	59.758	1	59.758	2.302	.099
Error	207.655	8	25.957		
Total	241911.000	10			
Corrected Total	247025.242	9			

The data in Table 4 revealed a significant P-value of 0.099 which is greater than 0.05 alpha value. This however means that the null hypothesis stated was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant gender difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence programmes and control at posttest.

Summary of the Findings

The following findings emerged from the study based on the data collected and analyzed to answer the research questions and to test the null hypotheses.

1. Emotional intelligence training programmes significantly enhanced the school engagement of students than the control,
2. Though, Emotional intelligence programmes slightly enhanced the school engagement of

female students than the male students, there was no significant gender difference between the school engagement mean scores of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence training programmes.

Discussion Of Findings

The discussion of findings was carried out sequentially in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided study.

Effects of Emotional Intelligence training programmes on school engagement among students

It was found from the study that Emotional Intelligence training programmes significantly enhanced the school engagement of students than the control. This means that students who were exposed to Emotional Intelligence training

programmes had higher school engagement mean score than their counterparts in the control group who received no training. This in other words, implies that Emotional Intelligence training programmes are very effective in promoting school engagement among senior secondary school students. This result agreed with the findings of Bereded *et al.* (2015) which revealed among others that Emotional Intelligence had direct and positive relationship with students' Academic engagement. The results similarly agreed with Barragan *et al.* (2021) who in their study found among others that Emotional Intelligence positively related with students' school engagement. The result could be because according to Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham, in Bairwa and Yadav, (2025) students with high level of Emotional Intelligence tend to display better classroom behaviour, improve problem-solving abilities and more resilient response to academic setbacks.

Effects of Emotional Intelligence training programmes and school engagement among male and female students

The results showed that Emotional Intelligence training programmes slightly enhanced the school engagement of female students than the male students. The results indicated that female students exposed to Emotional Intelligence training programmes had a slight higher school engagement mean score than the male students. This implies that Emotional Intelligence training programmes are more effective in enhancing female students' school engagement than the male students. The results supported the earlier findings of Naheed *et al.* (2025), Ngodi *et al.* (2020) and Joshi and Dutta (2014) who found from their respective studies that female students had superior school engagement than the male students if exposed to emotional intelligence programmes. The results are not surprising as according to Siswanto *et al.* (2024), girls are more emotional in their behaviour or attributes than their male counterparts. The results also showed that though, Emotional Intelligence programmes slightly enhanced the school engagement of female students than the male students, the difference was not significant. This implies that there was no significant difference between the school engagement mean scores of male and female students. In other words, Emotional Intelligence training programmes had effect on the school engagement of both the male and female students. The results aligned with those of Naheed *et al.* (2025), and Joshi and Dutta (2014) who in their respective studies found among others that there was no significant gender difference of the school engagement of students exposed to Emotional Intelligence training programme.

Educational Implication

1. The results indicated that Emotional Intelligence training programmes significantly enhanced the school engagement of students than the control. This implies that when the students have adequate understanding of themselves and their environment as well as be in charge

of their emotions, it could enhance their active participation in classroom activities.

2. It was also found from the study that there was no significant gender difference of the school engagements mean scores among students exposed to emotional intelligence training programme. This implies that the Emotional Intelligence and stability of students are very vital in enhancing students' school engagement irrespective of their differences based on gender.

Recommendations

1. Curriculum experts should integrate Emotional Intelligence training programmes into Secondary Education curriculum to enhance the school engagement among Nigerian students.
2. Teachers should understand the students' emotions while teaching them in the classroom irrespective of their differences based on gender.

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