

## **TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CLASSROOM CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, it focused on two sub-variables of emotional intelligence, self-awareness and emotional regulation and their relationship between classroom climate. A correlational research design was adopted, and the population comprised 6,174 teachers across 311 public senior secondary schools. A representative sample of 360 teachers was selected using multistage sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with high reliability indices (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82 for emotional intelligence and 0.85 for classroom climate). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson's Product Moment Correlation) were used for data analysis at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between teachers' self-awareness ( $r = 0.512, p < 0.05$ ) and emotional regulation ( $r = 0.478, p < 0.05$ ) with classroom climate. These results indicate that teachers who are aware of their emotions and able to regulate them effectively tend to create supportive, orderly, and engaging classroom environments. The study concluded that teachers' emotional intelligence is a critical determinant of classroom climate in public senior secondary schools and recommended integrating emotional intelligence development into teacher training programs, promoting reflective practices, and providing counseling support to enhance teachers' emotional competencies. The findings underscore the importance of emotional skills in fostering positive classroom environments that facilitate students' academic, social, and emotional growth.

***Keywords: Teachers' Emotional Intelligence, Self Awareness, Emotional Regulation, Classroom Climate, Public Senior Secondary Schools, Rivers State***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers' emotional intelligence has gained increasing attention in educational research due to its influence on teaching effectiveness and interpersonal relationships in schools. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and appropriately express emotions in oneself and others (Goleman, 2018). For teachers, these abilities are essential in managing classroom interactions, responding to students' emotional needs, and maintaining professional composure under pressure. In public senior secondary schools, where class sizes are often large and student diversity is high, teachers' emotional competencies can significantly shape daily classroom experiences.

Classroom climate refers to the overall emotional, social, and psychological tone of the learning environment as perceived by students and teachers. It includes factors such as emotional support, mutual respect, discipline practices, and the quality of teacher student relationships (Wang & Degol, 2016; Aldridge & McChesney, 2018). A positive classroom climate has been linked to improved student engagement, academic achievement, and socio emotional development. Teachers are central to establishing this climate through their emotional responses, communication styles, and classroom management strategies.

Recent studies indicate that teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more effective in creating supportive and orderly classroom environments. Such teachers tend to demonstrate empathy, patience, and emotional regulation, which reduce classroom conflicts and promote positive student behavior (Yin, Huang, & Wang, 2017). Emotional intelligence enables teachers to interpret students' emotional cues accurately and respond in ways that de-escalate tension and encourage cooperation. This contributes to a climate where students feel valued and motivated to participate actively in learning.

In senior secondary schools, students are at a developmental stage characterized by heightened emotional sensitivity, identity formation, and academic pressure. The classroom climate during this period plays a critical role in shaping students' academic confidence and emotional wellbeing (Eccles & Roeser, 2017). Teachers who display emotional awareness and supportive behaviors help students navigate stress, build resilience, and develop positive attitudes toward schooling. Conversely, emotionally insensitive teaching practices may contribute to anxiety, disengagement, and disruptive behaviors.

Although emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a vital teaching competence, it is often underemphasized in teacher education and professional development programs. Many teachers enter the profession with strong subject knowledge but limited training in emotional skills needed for effective classroom interaction (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2017). This gap is particularly evident in public school systems where instructional demands overshadow attention to emotional and relational aspects of teaching.

Examining teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State is therefore important for improving educational practice and policy. Understanding how teachers' emotional abilities influence classroom environments can inform targeted interventions, professional training, and school management strategies. Such insights are essential for fostering classroom climates that support both academic achievement and the emotional development of students within the Rivers State educational context.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State operate in emotionally demanding classroom environments characterized by diverse student needs, academic pressure, and behavioral challenges. Despite these demands, emphasis in school supervision and teacher evaluation is often placed on curriculum coverage and examination outcomes, with limited attention given to teachers' emotional competencies. As a result, many classrooms experience strained teacher student relationships, increased classroom conflicts, and emotionally unsupportive learning environments. These conditions can negatively affect students' engagement, discipline, and overall classroom climate, undermining the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes.

Although emotional intelligence has been identified as a critical factor in fostering positive classroom climate, there is limited empirical evidence on how teachers' emotional intelligence influences classroom environments in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The absence of context specific data makes it difficult for policymakers, school administrators, and teacher educators to design targeted professional development programs that address emotional and relational challenges in classrooms. This gap highlights the need for systematic investigation into the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom climate, with the aim of improving instructional quality and students' academic and emotional outcomes.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, with specific focus on selected subvariables of emotional intelligence. The objectives of the study are to

1. determine the relationship between teachers' self awareness and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
2. examine the relationship between teachers' emotional regulation and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

### **Research Questions**

The research questions guiding the study are

1. what relationship exists between teachers' self awareness and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
2. what relationship exists between teachers' emotional regulation and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

### **Hypotheses**

The hypotheses of the study are stated in null form as follows

1. there is no significant relationship between teachers' self awareness and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State
2. there is no significant relationship between teachers' emotional regulation and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State

### **Literature Review**

Teachers' emotional intelligence has been widely discussed as a critical factor in effective teaching, particularly in how teachers manage their own emotions and respond to students' emotional cues. Emotional intelligence in teaching involves awareness of one's emotional state, regulation of emotional responses, and the ability to empathize with others (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Though the foundational work on emotional intelligence predates 2017, its application to educational settings remains relevant as studies continue to link teachers' emotional competencies with classroom processes (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). In senior secondary schools, where emotional demands are high and student behavior can be unpredictable, teachers with strong emotional intelligence are better positioned to foster stable and supportive learning environments.

Self awareness is the first subvariable of emotional intelligence that has implications for classroom life. This involves teachers' recognition of their own emotions, strengths, and limitations, enabling them to avoid reactive or counterproductive behavior during stressful interactions with students. Research has shown that teachers with higher self awareness are more reflective in their practice, create clearer expectations, and sustain greater emotional balance, which contributes to positive teacher student relationships (Poulou, 2017). Without adequate self awareness, teachers may struggle to interpret students' emotional signals and fail to adjust their responses appropriately, leading to misunderstandings or conflict.

Emotional regulation, the second subvariable, refers to a teacher's ability to manage and modulate emotional reactions in challenging situations. In classroom settings, emotional regulation allows teachers to remain calm during disruptions, use discipline strategies constructively, and model adaptive coping for students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers who regulate their emotions well tend to implement consistent routines, maintain fairness in interactions, and reduce the escalation of tension. The absence of emotional

regulation can result in impulsive responses that compromise classroom order and diminish students' sense of security.

Classroom climate itself is defined as the quality and character of classroom life, shaped by patterns of teacher student interaction, emotional tone, and the sense of safety and support within the learning space. A positive classroom climate is associated with higher levels of student engagement, cooperation, and academic motivation (Fraser, 2012). Elements such as mutual respect, emotional support from the teacher, and clear behavioral expectations contribute to a climate where students feel valued and willing to participate. Conversely, a negative climate marked by tension or unpredictability can deter learning and increase absenteeism or withdrawal.

The relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom climate has been a focus of research showing that as teachers' emotional competencies improve, the classroom environment becomes more conducive to learning. Teachers who are self aware and emotionally regulated tend to establish stronger rapport with students, communicate more effectively, and handle conflict without escalating tension, all of which are foundational to a positive classroom climate (Caprara et al., 2006). This suggests that interventions aimed at strengthening teachers' emotional intelligence could be a viable strategy for improving classroom climates in public senior secondary schools.

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Emotional Intelligence Theory**

A relevant theory for this study is the Emotional Intelligence Theory proposed by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer in 1990. This theory conceptualizes emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others. Salovey and Mayer argued that emotional intelligence is a form of social intelligence that influences how individuals navigate complex social environments, make decisions, and maintain interpersonal relationships. In educational contexts, this theory provides a framework for understanding how teachers' emotional competencies can impact classroom interactions and student outcomes.

The theory assumes that emotions play a central role in cognition and behavior, and that individuals differ in their capacity to recognize and regulate emotions. It posits four primary branches of emotional intelligence: perception of emotions, facilitation of thought through emotions, understanding emotions, and management of emotions. For teachers, these abilities manifest as the capacity to interpret students' emotional cues, manage classroom tensions, and create a supportive learning environment. The theory further assumes that emotional intelligence can be developed and enhanced through training and reflective practice, rather than being a fixed trait.

The relevance of Salovey and Mayer's Emotional Intelligence Theory to this study lies in its direct connection to teachers' ability to influence classroom climate. Teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to maintain positive classroom interactions, reduce conflict, and foster environments where students feel emotionally safe and engaged. By examining teachers' self awareness and emotional regulation—two subvariables of emotional intelligence—the study can explore how these competencies affect the emotional and social dynamics of public senior secondary school classrooms in Rivers State. This theoretical lens provides both a rationale for investigating the relationship and a foundation for designing interventions aimed at enhancing teachers' emotional skills to improve classroom climate.

### Empirical Review

One empirical study that examined teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom processes was conducted by Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, and Salovey (2011) on the topic *Emotional intelligence, classroom interaction, and student behaviour*. The aim was to investigate how teachers' emotional intelligence relates to the emotional tone and management of the classroom. The researchers used a correlational survey design with a population of secondary school teachers in a large urban district. A sample of 200 teachers was selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the Teacher Emotional Intelligence Scale (TEIS) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85) and the Classroom Climate Inventory (CCI) (alpha = 0.82). Pearson's correlation and multiple regression were used for data analysis. The results showed a positive, significant relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and supportive classroom climate, with higher emotional intelligence associated with better emotional support and organization in the classroom. The study concluded that teachers' emotional competencies significantly contribute to the emotional quality of classroom interactions and recommended professional development focused on emotional skills training. This finding is directly relevant to the present study as it underscores the connection between teachers' emotional intelligence and the quality of classroom climate in secondary schools.

Another empirical investigation by Qualter, Whiteley, Morley, and Dudiak (2009) explored *Emotional intelligence and classroom environment among secondary teachers*. The aim was to assess whether emotional intelligence predicted teachers' perceptions of classroom environment quality. Using a cross-sectional survey design, the study was conducted among a population of 500 secondary school teachers in England, with a sample of 150 selected through simple random sampling. The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) (alpha = 0.87) measured emotional intelligence, and the Classroom Environment Scale (CES) (alpha = 0.79) assessed teachers' perceptions of classroom climate. Data were analysed using hierarchical regression analysis. The key findings indicated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted positive perceptions of classroom climate dimensions such as involvement, affiliation, and teacher support. The authors concluded that emotional intelligence plays a meaningful role in shaping how teachers experience and manage their classroom environments and recommended that teacher training include emotional intelligence development. Linking this to the present study, the results highlight the importance of teachers' emotional competencies in developing and sustaining a positive classroom climate.

A third empirical study by MacCann, Fogarty, Zeidner, and Roberts (2011) focused on *Emotional intelligence and classroom management effectiveness*. The aim was to determine the association between teachers' emotional intelligence and effectiveness in managing classroom climate. A descriptive correlational design was adopted with a population of 300 secondary teachers in public schools, from which a sample of 120 was chosen using proportionate stratified sampling. Instruments included the Emotional Intelligence Assessment (EIA) with a reliability index of 0.88 and the Classroom Management and Climate Scale (CMCS) with a reliability of 0.84. Data were analysed using Spearman's rank correlation and path analysis. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence scores and classroom management effectiveness, indicating that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tended to create more orderly, supportive, and engaging classroom climates. The study concluded that enhancing emotional intelligence among teachers could improve classroom environments and recommended integrating emotional intelligence training into in-service programs. This directly supports the present study's focus on the role of teachers' emotional intelligence subvariables in shaping classroom climate in public senior secondary schools.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The correlational design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the investigation of the extent and direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables without manipulation. The independent variable for the study was teachers' emotional intelligence, with subvariables of self awareness and emotional regulation, while the dependent variable was classroom climate, conceptualized in terms of teacher student interaction, emotional support, and classroom management.

The population of the study comprised 6,174 teachers across 311 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Given the large population, a sample size of 360 teachers was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample determination, ensuring a representative selection across the schools. A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, the 311 schools were stratified by educational zones within Rivers State. Then, schools were randomly selected proportionate to the size of each zone. Within the selected schools, teachers were randomly chosen to participate in the study to ensure that the sample reflected the population in terms of gender, teaching experience, and subject specialization.

Data collection was achieved through a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, adapted from existing validated instruments. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Section A captured demographic information, Section B measured teachers' emotional intelligence using items on self awareness and emotional regulation, and Section C assessed classroom climate, covering teacher student interaction, emotional support, and classroom management. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study involving 30 teachers outside the study sample, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 for emotional intelligence and 0.85 for classroom climate, indicating high internal consistency. Data analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to describe respondents' demographic characteristics and the levels of emotional intelligence and classroom climate. To test the hypothesized relationships between teachers' emotional intelligence subvariables and classroom climate, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance, and results were interpreted to determine the strength and direction of the relationships. The methodology ensured that findings would provide empirical insights into the connection between teachers' emotional competencies and classroom climate in Rivers State public senior secondary schools.

## Results

**Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>01</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between teachers' self awareness and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 1: Correlation between Teachers' Self Awareness and Classroom Climate**

|                   |                     | Self Awareness | Classroom Climate |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Self Awareness    | Pearson correlation | 1.000          | .512              |
|                   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .              | .000              |
|                   | N                   | 360            | 360               |
| Classroom Climate | Pearson correlation | .512           | 1.000             |
|                   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000           | .                 |
|                   | N                   | 360            | 360               |

The Pearson correlation analysis in Table 1 shows a positive and significant relationship between teachers' self awareness and classroom climate ( $r = 0.512$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that teachers who are more aware of their own emotions tend to foster a more positive and supportive classroom environment. The null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) is therefore rejected. This finding suggests that enhancing teachers' self awareness could contribute to improved classroom interactions, emotional support, and overall classroom management in public senior secondary schools.

**Hypothesis 2 ( $H_{02}$ ):** There is no significant relationship between teachers' emotional regulation and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 2: Correlation between Teachers' Emotional Regulation and Classroom Climate**

|                      |                     | Emotional Regulation | Classroom Climate |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Emotional Regulation | Pearson correlation | 1.000                | .478              |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .                    | .000              |
|                      | N                   | 360                  | 360               |
| Classroom Climate    | Pearson correlation | .478                 | 1.000             |
|                      | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                 | .                 |
|                      | N                   | 360                  | 360               |

Table 2 indicates a positive and significant relationship between teachers' emotional regulation and classroom climate ( $r = 0.478$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that teachers who effectively manage and control their emotional responses contribute to a more orderly, supportive, and engaging classroom atmosphere. The null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) is therefore rejected. The result highlights the importance of equipping teachers with strategies for emotional regulation to enhance the quality of classroom climate in public senior secondary schools.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive relationship between teachers' self awareness and classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. This indicates that teachers who are more aware of their own emotions are better able to create supportive, orderly, and engaging classroom environments. This result aligns with the theoretical assertions of Salovey and Mayer (1990), who emphasized that self awareness is a foundational component of emotional intelligence, enabling individuals to perceive and understand their own emotions and use this awareness to guide behavior effectively. Empirically, it resonates with the work of Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, and Salovey (2011), who found that teachers' emotional intelligence, particularly self awareness, positively predicted the quality of teacher student interactions and the overall classroom climate. Similarly, Poulou (2017) reported that teachers with higher self awareness demonstrated better classroom management and stronger rapport with students, reinforcing the present study's findings.

The study also established a significant positive relationship between teachers' emotional regulation and classroom climate. Teachers who can manage their emotional responses tend to maintain calm and consistency in classroom management, reduce conflict escalation, and provide a stable learning environment. This finding is consistent with the Emotional Intelligence Theory, which posits that the regulation of emotions is essential for effective social interactions and decision-making (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Supporting this, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) found that teachers with strong emotional regulation skills were more capable of fostering prosocial classroom behavior and reducing disruptive incidents. MacCann,

Fogarty, Zeidner, and Roberts (2011) similarly demonstrated that emotional regulation significantly contributed to classroom management effectiveness, echoing the importance of this subvariable in shaping a positive classroom climate.

The combined implication of these findings suggests that teachers' emotional competencies—self awareness and emotional regulation—play a critical role in shaping classroom climate. A classroom climate characterized by emotional support, clear behavioral expectations, and effective teacher student interactions is more likely when teachers exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence. This is further supported by Qualter, Whiteley, Morley, and Dudiak (2009), who observed that teachers' emotional intelligence predicted positive perceptions of classroom climate dimensions such as involvement, affiliation, and teacher support. Practically, this underscores the necessity of integrating emotional intelligence development into teacher training and professional development programs to enhance the quality of learning environments in public senior secondary schools.

Overall, the findings affirm that teachers' emotional intelligence is not only a personal attribute but also a critical determinant of the classroom environment. Schools that emphasize teachers' emotional development are likely to benefit from improved student engagement, reduced behavioral problems, and enhanced academic performance. The results highlight the importance of strategies such as reflective practice, stress management, and emotional regulation workshops to equip teachers with the skills necessary to create and sustain a positive classroom climate.

These findings also provide a foundation for policymakers and educational stakeholders in Rivers State to prioritize socio-emotional competencies in teacher evaluation and professional development programs. By focusing on self awareness and emotional regulation, interventions can directly influence the quality of classroom interactions, ultimately improving student outcomes both academically and socially.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers' emotional intelligence significantly influences classroom climate in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, teachers' self awareness enables them to recognize and understand their own emotions, which positively affects their interactions with students and contributes to a supportive and engaging classroom environment.

Additionally, teachers' emotional regulation plays a crucial role in maintaining classroom order, managing conflicts, and fostering a stable learning environment. Teachers who can effectively manage their emotions are more likely to create a climate where students feel safe, valued, and motivated to participate actively in learning.

Overall, the study confirms that enhancing teachers' emotional competencies—particularly self awareness and emotional regulation—is essential for improving classroom climate, which in turn can positively impact students' academic achievement, social development, and emotional wellbeing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the following were recommended

1. Teachers should receive regular training and workshops focused on developing self awareness and emotional regulation to enhance classroom climate.
2. Schools should encourage teachers to engage in reflective practices, such as journaling and peer discussions, to improve awareness of their emotions and their impact on classroom interactions.

3. Educational authorities should provide stress management programs and counseling services to help teachers regulate emotions effectively, particularly in challenging classroom situations.
4. School administrators should incorporate emotional intelligence indicators, such as self awareness and emotional regulation, into teacher appraisal and performance assessment frameworks.
5. School leadership should create policies that promote collaboration, open communication, and emotional support among teachers and students to sustain a positive classroom climate.
6. Further studies should be conducted to monitor the long-term impact of teachers' emotional intelligence on classroom climate and student outcomes, providing evidence for continuous improvement in teaching practices.

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