

SOFT SKILLS AS A PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC STAFF JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN OGUN STATE

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Abstract

The success of any educational institution depends largely on the effectiveness and efficiency of its academic staff. The study therefore examined how soft skills predicted academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. The descriptive research of survey type was adopted for the study and the population of the study comprised all the 497 academic staff in the two public colleges of education in Ogun State. The sample of the study was 250 academic staff which was selected using simple random sampling technique. Two researcher-self developed questionnaires tagged Soft Skill Questionnaire (SSQ) and Academic Staff Job Performance Questionnaire (ASJPQ) were used to gather data. The instruments were validated by experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation, Tai Solarin University of Education and the reliability co-efficient of the instruments were .74 and .70 respectively. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there was significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance ($r = .533, p < .05$); that there was significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance ($r = .718, p < .05$); that there was significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance ($r = .765, p < .05$). Lastly, that there was significant relationship between communication skills and academic staff job performance ($r = .659, p < .05$). The study therefore concluded that soft skills are crucial for effective teaching, efficient management of academic responsibilities, and fostering positive relationships with students and colleagues. It is therefore recommended that Open communication should be encouraged through feedback mechanisms, active listening exercises, and teaching aids can ensure clearer interactions with students and colleagues, thereby enhancing job performance.

Keywords: *Soft skills, Academic Staff Job Performance, Emotional Intelligence, Problem Solving Skills, Leadership Skills, Communication Skills*

Introduction

Colleges of Education in Nigeria are established to perform three core functions: teaching, research, and community service. To achieve these core mandates, this subset of higher education institutions requires professionally productive lecturers to impart useful knowledge and skills to students that are expected to teach in primary and secondary schools within and outside Nigeria, after their graduation (Oke, 2021). Also, lecturers are also expected to provide community services towards the growth and development of the nation

locally and internationally, aside their teaching and research outputs. However, it appears that the operation of colleges of education in Nigeria has not yet met the expectations of their stated goals and objectives. Adebayo and Akinwumi (2013), and Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2014) observed that the day to day activities of lecturers in colleges of education has not brought about the practical achievement of their core functions as stated in the national policy on education due to the perceived low teaching, research and community service experienced among them.

The job performance of academics is critical to the realization of college of education objectives. Ogunode and Eimuhi (2023) defined academic staff job performance as constituting all activities and functions expected of an academic to execute within a specific time. It has to do with the abilities of the academic to fulfil his/her duties in the institutions. Academic staff job performance means assigned responsibilities and functions given to an academic staff to actualize the aims and objectives of the institutions and the decree of execution or accomplishment. Job performance is the result of individual or group work that shows the level of achievement of job qualifications in organizations aimed to meet organizational goals (Al- Omari & Okasheh, 2017). Ogunode et al. (2023) defined job performance of academic staff as all non-teaching services done at a particular time. The job performance of academic staff matters in tertiary institutions because without their services the academic staff cannot go far in the attainment of teaching, researching and provision of community services.

In this present technological change, lecturers must disseminate good knowledge that will enable the learners to meet up with this present challenges. Yasmeen Bano (2019) reported that every educational institution needs to shift their focus from theoretical knowledge to the skill-based education with practical and dynamic methods. It was further submitted that educational institutions should try as much as possible to focus on behavioural aspects such as leadership skills, emotional intelligence, communication skills, and problem solving skills that will play the main role in the success of a learner. This implies that soft skills should be embedded in the school curriculum for effectiveness of both the lecturers and students.

Soft skills are personal trait that enhances lecturers' interaction and performance in teaching. More importantly, soft skill is one of the components to improve quality teaching in educational system. For lecturers to perform and for effective and efficient result of educational objectives to be achieved, there is need for acquisition of soft skills. Soft skills are skills which characterise relationship with other people, or which are about how an individual approaches life and work. Ginting (2016) defined soft skills as intra- and inter-personal (socio-emotional) skills, essential for personal development, social participation and workplace success. Bellanca and

Brandt (2010) described soft skills as social and emotional capabilities that shape people's attitudes and behaviours. Employers consider this form of soft skills essential in the workplace, as artificial intelligence alters how people process and perform routine tasks in the workplace. Soft skills are uniquely human skill that machines cannot replicate. Cimatti (2016) referred to soft skills as character traits and personality skills that influence individuals' perceptions. In respect to this study, indicators such as emotional intelligence, problem solving skill, communication skill and leadership skill were used to measure soft skill.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others. People with high emotional intelligence are typically good at navigating social complexities, managing stress and making decisions that consider both logic and emotion. Intelligence among lecturers refers to their ability to understand, manage and effectively express their own emotions, as well as understand and respond to the emotions of their students and colleagues. It involves skills such as empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, and social skills, which are essential for creating a positive and supportive learning environment. For lecturers, high emotional intelligence can enhance classroom management, improve relationships with students, and foster a learning atmosphere where students feel respected and motivated. When lecturers exhibit emotional intelligence, they will be better at handling conflicts, adapting to different personalities and learning styles and providing constructive feedback. This can lead to better student engagement, increased academic success, and a stronger overall connection between lecturers and students (Odunukwe et al., 2024). Also, Sambu (2019) opined that emotional intelligence is the cognitive dexterity an individual exhibits in managing his/her emotions that promote good thinking. In order words, it is the potentiality or expertness to precisely see feelings, to get to and create feelings, to help thought, to get feelings and passionate learning, and proactively responds to it.

Another important indicator of soft skill is problem-solving skill. Problem-solving skills involve how lecturers approach problems methodically, starting from known concepts and progressing to unknown ones, to enhance proficiency in teaching and learning. This skill encompasses the ability to identify a problem,

brainstorm and analyze potential solutions, and implement the most effective one. Chileya et al. (2020) described it as a process of working towards solutions to a problem. The problem-solving method in teaching involves strategies used to address and resolve issues. Problem-solving skills enable individuals to find meaningful solutions using effective and timely strategies. As Wang (2021) noted, problem-solving is prevalent in modern life and is crucial for overcoming daily challenges. According to Wilson (2020), problem-solving skills include a set of techniques for investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, or correcting and integrating previous knowledge. This approach emphasizes lecturers' creativity and innovative thinking. It also aids lecturers in making instructional decisions, allowing students to learn at their own pace and explore problems independently. Problem-solving skills are essential for success in academic pursuits, professional endeavours, and everyday life, as they involve identifying challenges, generating and evaluating potential solutions, and implementing effective strategies.

Also, leadership skill is another indicator of soft skill. Adedigba (2019) submitted that leadership skill is the key to transform persistently low-performing classroom or group of students to high performing learners. Leadership skills give the lecturer the autonomy to manage and organise the classroom in such a way that he/she prefers to handle it that will make the learners to get along. Leadership skills have been associated with 21st century skills that are imperative for instructors whose pursuit is in a high performance environment, which will promote their efficiency (Tang, et al., 2015). Leadership skills play a vital role in lecturers' job effectiveness. These leadership skills are expected of lecturers to be zealous in performing their duties, loyalty to duty, delegating duties to right persons (students), diligence in supervision of student groups and classroom work, punctuality at classroom, and enthusiasm at work when in the classroom.

Another indicator of soft skill is communication skill. Communication skill is one of the essential tools in teaching. Lecturers use it as a means of impacting necessary knowledge to the learners in order to achieve educational objectives. It builds relationship between the lecturers and the

learners. This skill involves ability of the lecturers to communicate with his/her learner in such a way that can be understood before learning can take place. Lecturers' job performance comes in when the learner can interpret what the lecturers have communicated. Therefore, teaching profession is a social interaction in form of collaboration between instructors and learners (Lim, et al., 2013). The lecturer is expected to get his/her idea communicated to the learners without any ambiguity or misconception. This will assist the learners to understand and interpret correctly the intention of the lecturer. According to Alamgir et al. (2017), lecturers need good communication skills for facilitating the students and achieving good professional goals. They went further that performance of lecturers in the classroom totally depends upon the communication skills and that if the lecturer has good communication skills then he/she can easily convey his/her message or deliver the lecture in an understandable manner. This means that effective teaching cannot take place without effective communication skills. Ability of the lecturers to communicate well will enhance good performance of students in the school system. Communication skills involve oral, listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. Conceptually, good communication skills of lecturers are the basic need of academics' success of learners and professional success of life.

Statement of the Problem

In Ogun State, public colleges of education are faced with challenges such as declining instructional quality, inadequate mentorship for students and limited collaboration among staff. These issues may be linked to a lack of emphasis on soft skills, which are crucial for creating a cohesive and productive academic environment. The success of any educational institution depends largely on the effectiveness and efficiency of its academic staff. While technical expertise and subject knowledge are essential, soft skills such as emotional intelligence, problem solving skills, leadership skills and communication skills play a critical role in enhancing job performance. It is against this backdrop that the study examined how soft skills predicted academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to

examine how soft skills predicted academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. Specifically, the study:

1. examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State;
2. found the relationship between problem solving skill and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State;
3. established the relationship between leadership skill and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State;
4. ascertained the relationship between communication skill and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State;

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses formulated were tested in the study at .05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between problem solving skill and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between leadership skill and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between communication skill and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

Literature Review

Macqual et al. (2021) assessed whether the soft skills curriculum and instruction course has been effectively implemented in university teacher education programmes. The study was theory based designed to inculcate soft skills in would-be teachers within two semesters. The study used questionnaires and performed data analysis by way of partial least square structural

equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software in a non-experimental procedure with a total of 722 prospective teachers. The analysis revealed that prospective teachers gained moderate soft skills, which, in turn, benefited them in classroom control and, ultimately, teaching success in terms of lesson planning, development, and results. The study suggested that the PLS-SEM model shows that participation in the curriculum and instruction course generates different kinds of benefits to teachers at the same time.

Wey-Amaehwule and Ogbonna (2024) examined emotional intelligence and effective job performance among lecturers of educational management in Rivers State Universities. The study was guided by three specific objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. A correlational design was employed for the research. The population of the study consisted of 104 lecturers of Educational Management in the 2023/2024 academic session, given the manageable size population, census sampling technique was adopted for the study. The instrument used for data collection was self-developed questionnaires, which were validated by three experts, two in the Department of Educational Management and one in Measurement and Evaluation all in Rivers State University. The reliability of the instrument was done with the aid of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), resulting in coefficient index of .83 for the Educational Management Lecturers' Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire and .76 for the Effective Job Performance in Rivers State Questionnaire. The finding of the study showed that a positive relationship exists between self awareness, self-motivation, social skills and Effective Job Performance among Educational Management lecturers in Rivers State. Based on the findings, the study recommended that institutions should recognize and reward self-motivated behavior, provide professional development opportunities and set achievable goals to enhance lecturers' job performance. Additionally, institutions should also implement training programmes focused on communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution, fostering a supportive environment for constructive conflict management among students and staff for effective job performance.

Asogwa and Oboreh (2024) investigated

the effect of emotional intelligence on academic staff job performance of Federal Universities in the South East, Nigeria. The specific objectives were: to determine the extent to which self-awareness relates to academic staff job performance, to ascertain the extent to which self-management relates to academic staff job performance, and to establish the extent to which social awareness relate to academic staff job performance of federal universities in the south East, Nigeria. Correlation research design was employed because the study sought to establish the degree or extent of the relationships among the studied variables and the data were gotten through structured questionnaire designed in five-point Likert scale. The data collected was analyzed with Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The result indicated that there was positive and significant relationship between self-awareness and academic staff job performance ($r = .65, p < .05, n = 496$), that there was positive and significant correlation between self-management and academic staff job performance ($r = .59, p < .05, n = 496$), and that there was positive and significant relationship between social awareness and academic job performance ($r = .45, p < .05, n = 496$). The implication was that a holistic understanding of the dimensions of emotional intelligence would not only enable the individual workers to effectively manage their emotions but help the workers to overcome challenges and defuse conflict in pursuance to the attainment of goal.

Umirih and Oluwu (2023) investigated teachers' soft skills and job engagement in public secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational design. The population comprised 7,086 teachers in the 254 public senior secondary schools in the 25 Local Government Areas of Delta State. A sample of 379 teachers was drawn from 30 schools. The instruments that were used for data collection in this study were two self-structured questionnaire "Teacher's Soft Skills Questionnaire (TSSQ)" and "Job Engagement Questionnaire (JEQ)" developed by the researcher. The face and content validities of the instruments were assured by four experts in the Faculty of Education and the reliability coefficient was obtained using Cronbach method to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, which yielded a co-

efficient of .84 for the independent variable and .76 for the dependent variable. 398 copies of the questionnaire were administered but 379 copies were fully filled and retrieved. The research questions were answered using simple regression while the hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with simple regression at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that communications skills and leadership skills predicted job engagement in public secondary schools in Delta State to high extent. Also, they both significantly predicted job engagement of teachers. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that teachers should ensure that they communicate properly in schools and also expect feedback. They should show good leadership qualities by attending to issues arising in schools promptly and giving room for students to air their views.

Oluwalola and Awodiji (2021) linked soft skills to business education teachers' job effectiveness. Three research questions guided the study. The study population included all the secondary school principals, Vice principals, Heads of Department and students that offer business education related subjects in Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria. Random sampling and stratified techniques were used to select 316 participants. The study used adapted structured questionnaires tagged "Teachers' Soft Skills Questionnaire (TSSQ)" and Business Education Teachers' Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (BETJEQ). The study used descriptive statistics to answer the research questions and Pearson Products Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test hypotheses. The study found the level of business education teachers' soft skills and their job effectiveness to be high at 70.6% and 64.6 %. Also, the result revealed a strong, positive linkage between the two variables, $r = .866, n = 316, p < .000$. By implication, soft skills will promote teachers' job effectively positively. That is, the higher the soft skills in the teachers, the better their effectiveness. Therefore, the study recommended for practice based on the findings that special training in form of workshop should be organised for Business education teachers on regular basis by government in collaboration with professional bodies to promote up-to-date soft skills that are transferable and promote teaching effectiveness.

Methodology

The descriptive research of survey type was adopted for the study and the population of the study comprised all the 497 academic staff in the two public colleges of education in Ogun State. The sample of the study was 250 academic staff which was selected using simple random sampling technique. Two researcher-self developed questionnaires tagged Soft Skill Questionnaire (SSQ) and Academic Staff Job Performance Questionnaire (ASJPQ) were used to gather data. The reliability co-efficient of the

instruments were .74 and .70 respectively. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State:

Table 1: Summary of PPMC on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

Variables		Emotional Intelligence	Academic staff Job Performance
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson	1	.533
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Academic staff Job Performance	Pearson	.533	1
	Correlation	.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	250	250

Table 1 summarizes the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. A correlation coefficient of $r = .533$ indicates a moderate degree of relationship between the two variables. There is a significant relationship between emotional

intelligence and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between problem solving skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State:

Table 2: Summary of PPMC on the relationship between problem solving skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

Variables		Problem Solving Skills	Academic staff Job Performance
Problem Solving Skills	Pearson	1	.718
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Academic staff Job Performance	Pearson	.718	1
	Correlation	.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	250	250

Table 2 summarizes the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between problem solving skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. A correlation coefficient of $r = .718$ indicates a high degree of relationship between the two variables. There is a

significant relationship between problem solving skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between leadership skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State:

Table 3: Summary of PPMC on the relationship between leadership skills and academic staff job

performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

Variables		Leadership Skills	Academic staff Job Performance
Leadership Skills	Pearson	1	.765
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Academic staff Job Performance	Pearson	.765	1
	Correlation	.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	250	250

Table 3 summarizes the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between leadership skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. A correlation coefficient of $r = .765$ indicates a high degree of relationship between the two variables. There is a

significant relationship between leadership skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between communication skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State:

Table 4: Summary of PPMC on the relationship between communication skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State

Variables		Communication Skills	Academic staff Job Performance
Communication Skills	Pearson	1	.659
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	250	250
Academic staff Job Performance	Pearson	.659	1
	Correlation	.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	250	250

Table 4 summarizes the findings of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between communication skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. A correlation coefficient of $r = .659$ indicates a high degree of relationship between the two variables. There is a significant relationship between communication skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State.

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis revealed that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. The result supported the findings of Obiora and Igbinoba (2020) who found that emotional intelligence positively influences job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and productivity among academic staff in Nigeria. Their study revealed that lecturers with strong emotional intelligence were more effective in managing classroom dynamics, fostering positive student relationships, and meeting institutional goals.

The second hypothesis revealed that there was a significant relationship between problem solving skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. The result corroborates with the findings of Adeoye and Elegbeleye (2021) that investigated the impact of problem-solving skills on teacher effectiveness in Nigerian higher institutions and found a positive relationship. The result also revealed that lecturers with strong analytical and critical thinking skills were more effective in delivering quality education, and achieving desired learning outcomes. In addition, Adeniran and Onuoha (2020) found that problem-solving skills significantly improve academic staff's ability to manage conflict, enhance student engagement, and meet institutional objectives. They emphasized that fostering problem-solving skills among lecturers could lead to better decision-making and improved academic outcomes.

The third hypothesis revealed that there was a significant relationship between leadership skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. The

result agreed with the findings of Ogundele et al. (2022) who examined the role of leadership skills in enhancing lecturer effectiveness in Nigerian colleges of education. Their findings confirmed that leadership skills, such as conflict resolution, strategic planning, and team coordination, significantly influence lecturers' ability to meet academic and administrative goal.

The fourth hypothesis revealed that there was a significant relationship between communication skills and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. The result supported the findings of Hargie (2016) emphasized that communication is the backbone of teaching and learning processes. Academic staff with strong communication skills are better equipped to explain complex concepts, engage students, and foster an interactive learning environment, which enhances their overall job performance. Similarly, communication skills help lecturers convey expectations, provide constructive feedback, and collaborate effectively with colleagues and administrators. Additionally, Adewale and Okoro (2022) found that communication skills significantly influenced lecturers' ability to build rapport with students, foster a positive classroom climate, and resolve conflicts. They emphasized that lecturers with strong verbal and non-verbal communication skills were more likely to create inclusive learning environments, thereby enhancing their job performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed a significant relationship between soft skills (emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, leadership skills, and communication skills) and academic staff job performance in public colleges of education in Ogun State. This finding established that these soft skills are crucial for effective teaching, efficient management of academic responsibilities, and fostering positive relationships with students and colleagues. By enhancing their emotional intelligence, problem-solving abilities, leadership capabilities, and communication proficiency, academic staff can significantly improve their job performance and contribute to institutional success. Based on the findings, the study recommended that:

1. Government should organize regular workshops and training sessions focused

on developing emotional intelligence among academic staff. These programmes should emphasize self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation to enhance their interpersonal relationships and overall job performance.

2. Colleges should integrate problem-solving skill development into their professional development initiatives.
3. Leadership development programmes should be implemented for academic staff to improve skills such as strategic thinking, team management, and conflict resolution. This can include mentorship opportunities, leadership seminars, and succession planning to prepare staff for administrative and leadership responsibilities.
4. Open communication should be encouraged through feedback mechanisms, active listening exercises, and teaching aids can ensure clearer interactions with students and colleagues, thereby enhancing job performance.

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