



Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Wellbeing among Women Religious in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Women Religious are called to bear effective witness to the gospel in their religious vocation. However, some of them seem unable to manage their emotions and the emotions of others, thereby hindering their ability to effectively live out their religious calling. Consequently, this study examined the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Wellbeing among Women Religious in Nigeria. The study was guided by Goleman's theory of Emotional Intelligence and Ryff's theory of Psychological Wellbeing using a quantitative approach via a correlational research design. The population was 5,971 and the sample size was 375 selected using a proportionate stratified random sampling. The participants' emotional intelligence was assessed using the Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment tool, while their psychological wellbeing was measured using the Carol Ryff Scale of Psychological Wellbeing. Pearson's correlation test was performed to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among the participants. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among Women Religious in Nigeria ($r = 0.348$, $p < 0.01$). Recommendations based on the findings were made, including suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Wellbeing, Women Religious

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

The meaning of the following terms as used in the study is stated thus:

Emotional Intelligence: The ability to recognize and manage one's emotions and the emotions of others, which helps in the appropriate direction of thoughts and actions to enhance healthy relationships between oneself and others. Concerning this study, it deals with self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

Self-Awareness: Recognizing one's emotions, personality, strengths, and weaknesses and noticing their impacts on others.

Self-management: Controlling one's emotional reactions to provocations and stressful moments and at the same time, upholding a positive outlook.

Social awareness: Being able to acknowledge the viewpoints and emotions of others, be interested in their affairs, and participate effectively in attending to their needs.

Relationship management: Ability to maintain a healthy relationship with others, communicate with them clearly, and be a sign of motivation for them.

Psychological Wellbeing: The emotional health and general functioning of a person which involves the feeling of happiness and satisfaction in life. In this study, it deals with self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and autonomy.

Self-acceptance: Unconditional admittance of one's personality, including strengths and weaknesses.

Positive relations with others: Being able to be in a relationship with others in a meaningful way that fosters trust, satisfaction, and warmth.

Personal growth: Improving oneself in thoughts, words, and actions by utilizing new skills and experiences.

Purpose in life: The belief that there is meaning in life that directs people's way of life in the attainment of their life aspirations.

Environmental mastery: Making effective use of opportunities and having a sense of mastery and competence in one's environment.

Autonomy: Being firm and confident in doing what is right without conforming to the group and social pressures.

Women Religious in Nigeria: Female religious in the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria, who follow Christ more closely by living the evangelical counsels.

I. INTRODUCTION

There has recently been a significant increase in research into the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. Remarkably, the two variables do correlate. Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, comprehend, express, control, assess, and use emotions effectively across various aspects of life (Goleman, 1995). It plays a critical role in forming strong relationships, completing tasks, finding fulfillment in one's work, and reducing stress and conflict. Moreover, it focuses on emotional control and learning when and how to express emotions (Cherniss, 2000). Psychological wellbeing is a condition of outstanding mental functioning characterized by achieving one's potential, effectively managing life's difficulties, and experiencing a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Ryff, 1989). It encourages self-determination, personal growth, gaining control of one's environment, forming rewarding relationships, and having a feeling of purpose in life (Dhanabhakya & Sarath, 2023). Psychological wellbeing allows a person to maintain a feeling of balance in emotion, thinking, and social connections, as well as a desire to actively participate in self-control processes such as emotion regulation (Tang et al., 2019).

Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the psychological wellbeing of a person. Individuals exhibiting high levels of emotional intelligence typically experience low perceived stress, elevated life satisfaction and happiness, strong motivation for achieving life success, high self-esteem, assertiveness, and openness (Vivekananda & Jugnu, 2018, p. 5). Consequently, people of higher emotional intelligence can manage social situations, they have better possibilities of improving their social support which in turn promotes their psychological wellbeing (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2020). It is interesting to note that several scholars have examined the two concepts of emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. In a study conducted in India by Bhojwani (2019), the ability of young people to successfully navigate life's problems was shown to be significantly correlated with their degree of emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. As a result, young people with greater emotional intelligence can manage and maintain relationships as well as show empathy and care for others, whereas individuals with lower emotional intelligence frequently find it difficult to maintain relationships since they have little empathy.

Similarly, Mutuku et al. (2021) explored emotional intelligence and adjustment to communal life among consecrated female religious in Kenya and discovered that the adjustment to communal living is impacted by emotional intelligence. Thus, consecrated women ought to have self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management skills to properly integrate into society. Ugoani and Ewuzie (2013) conducted a study in Nigeria that examined the imperative of emotional intelligence for psychological wellbeing among adolescents. The study found that emotional intelligence was pivotal in fostering mental health and psychological wellbeing in individuals. According to the research, emotionally intelligent people have a strong sense of self-worth and abstain from any bad behaviors that go against their wellness. That is, the research indicates a strong correlation between psychological wellbeing and emotional intelligence.

The findings of these studies suggest that Women Religious in Nigeria with higher emotional intelligence levels can care for and maintain relationships, as well as empathize with others. They can live a fulfilling religious life, embrace their identity, experience personal development, find meaning and purpose in life, foster meaningful relationships with one another, and defend environmental mastery and autonomy. Although studies on emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing have been conducted, the relationship between these two variables among Women Religious in Nigeria has not been examined. This gap, therefore, prompted this study.

The objective of the Study: This study aims to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among Women Religious in Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis: The study was guided by an alternate hypothesis (H_1). There is a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among women religious in Nigeria.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Various empirical studies have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. Nag et al. (2023), using a quantitative study with a descriptive research methodology alongside interpretivist philosophy, examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among B-school students in Hyderabad Metro, India. To gather data, a survey instrument was created and distributed online via several platforms using a sample size of 300. The findings showed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence factors and psychological wellbeing components ($p < 0.05$). This emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in promoting psychological wellbeing.

Similarly, Makuloluwa and Arachchige (2015) in a cross-sectional study, explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing of 120 management undergraduates of the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. The findings revealed a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among the participants, with a p-value of 0.002, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence tend to experience greater psychological wellbeing.

Also, Smith (2012) conducted a study in South Africa to investigate the connection between emotional intelligence training on psychological wellbeing and Trait emotional intelligence among disadvantaged youth, influenced by the legacy of apartheid. The study employed a true experimental design

with pre-test-post-test assessments and included a sample size of 63 participants. The findings revealed a significant relationship between psychological wellbeing and trait emotional intelligence ($p < 0.0001$). The study's findings suggest that enhancing emotional intelligence skills may positively influence psychological wellbeing, even in contexts marked by historical adversity and stressors. Furthermore, Olah and Utibe (2022) investigated the association between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among federal officials in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, Nigeria. Their study, employing an ex-post facto design with a sample size of 354 civil servants, aimed to understand the predictive power of emotional intelligence on psychological wellbeing. The findings revealed a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among federal officials, ($p = 0.00$) implying that higher levels of emotional intelligence predict better psychological wellbeing. This study provides valuable insights into how emotional intelligence contributes to the psychological wellbeing of individuals within organizational settings.

Similarly, Agu and Nwankwo (2019) examined the relationship between psychological wellbeing and emotional intelligence among undergraduates of the Faculty of Social Science, Faculty of Law, and Faculty of Environmental Science, Agbani Campus, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu State Nigeria with a sample size was 241. Using a correlational design, the study employed Wong and Law's theory of emotional intelligence and Ryff's theory of psychological wellbeing. The study indicates a strong and positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and emotional intelligence among undergraduates ($p < .01$), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit psychological health. Exploring similar associations among women religious in Nigeria aims to elucidate the role of emotional intelligence in shaping their overall psychological wellbeing within the unique context of religious communities.

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing across diverse populations. However, there's a research gap concerning this relationship among women religious in Nigeria. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between emotional intelligence and the psychological wellbeing among women religious in Nigeria.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative methodology via a correlational design. The population of the study involved 5,971 women religious from 9 provinces in Nigeria and the sample size was 375 selected through a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The tools for the collection of data were the 24-item Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment tool and the 18-item Psychological Wellbeing Scale. Inferential statistics was utilized to ascertain the congruence or disparity between the collected data and the proposed hypothesis. The Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to test the hypothesis. Results from the analysis were displayed in tables alongside their interpretations in response to the research question.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics Of Participants

Table 1

Age	Frequency	%
20 - 30	23	7.6
31 - 40	49	16.1
41 - 50	111	36.5
51 - 60	93	30.6
61 and above	28	9.2
Total	304	100.0

Participants' Age

An analysis of participant demographics in Table 1 reveals a distinct pattern in the age distribution within the sample. A notable proportion of participants fall within the 41 to 60-year-old age bracket, indicating a predominant representation of individuals in middle adulthood. Specifically, the age groups of 41-50 and 51-60 emerge as the most prevalent among participants. Additionally, individuals aged 31-40 constitute a significant segment of the sample, suggesting a diverse representation across various stages of adulthood. Conversely, smaller proportions are observed in the 20-30 and 61 and above age categories, indicating lesser representation from younger and older age groups. The prevalence of middle-aged participants, particularly

those aged 41 to 60, underscores a significant demographic trend within the study sample. This demographic composition may reflect inherent characteristics of the target population or contextual factors influencing participation rates. Understanding the age distribution is crucial for contextualizing and interpreting research findings, as different age groups may offer distinct perspectives and responses.

Table 2

Level of Education	Frequency	%
S.S.C.E.	35	11.5
B.Sc.	125	41.1
M.A/M.Sc.	68	22.4
Ph.D.	24	7.9
Other	52	17.1
Total	304	100.0

Participants' Level of Education

Table 2 shows the distribution of educational backgrounds among participants in the sample, highlighting a diverse range of educational achievements. The majority of participants possess Bachelor's degrees, followed by those with Master's degrees. Notably, a significant portion of participants have Secondary School Certificate Examination qualifications. In contrast, smaller proportions are observed among Ph.D. degree holders and individuals categorized under "Other." These findings emphasize a varied educational profile among participants, indicative of varying academic accomplishments within the sample. The prevalence of Bachelor's and Master's degree holders suggests a considerable representation of individuals with undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, respectively. On the contrary, the lower proportions among Ph.D. degree holders and those in the "Other" category suggest a lesser prevalence of advanced academic qualifications or alternative educational pathways within the sample. Understanding the range of educational levels is imperative for situating the demographic attributes of the study participants and interpreting research results regarding their educational backgrounds.

Table 3

Years as Religious	Frequency	%
0 - 10	84	27.6
11 - 20	80	26.3
21 - 30	89	29.3
31 - 40	39	12.8
41 - 50	11	3.6
51 - 60	1	.3
Total	304	100.0

Participants' Years as Religious

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of participants' years as religious within the sample, demonstrating varying lengths of religious experience. The majority of participants have been involved in religious activities for 20 years or less, with significant numbers falling within the 0-10 and 11-20 year brackets. Conversely, smaller proportions are observed among those with 31 years or more of religious involvement, particularly in the 41-50, 51-60, and 31-40 year categories. These findings imply a diverse range of religious experiences among participants, with a notable concentration in the initial stages of their religious journey. Recognizing the distribution of years in religious service is important for understanding participants' religious backgrounds and interpreting research findings within the context of their religious experiences.

Table 4*Participants' Apostolate*

Apostolate	Frequency	%
School/ Teaching	118	38.8
Hospital/ Health	46	15.1
Caregiver/Hospitality/Pastoral	36	11.8
Formation Ministry	32	10.5
Secretariat/Office/Account	33	10.9
Administration	8	2.6
Other	31	10.2
Total	304	100.0

Table 4 outlines the distribution of participants' roles within their religious communities, revealing a wide range of responsibilities. The most common apostolate among participants is School/Teaching, followed by Hospital/Health and Caregiver/Hospitality/Pastoral roles. Additionally, notable proportions occupy roles in Formation Ministry and Secretariat/Office/Account positions, while fewer participants are engaged in Administration and Other categories. These findings underscore the diverse range of apostolic activities undertaken by participants, emphasizing the diverse nature of their roles within religious institutions. Understanding the variety of roles participants undertake is important for seeing their contributions to their religious communities and interpreting research results about their duties.

The study's sample population comprised Women Religious in Nigeria from diverse provinces and religious institutes, encompassing various age groups, educational backgrounds, years of religious profession, and apostolates, as depicted in Tables 1 to 4. Although the majority of participants fell within certain age brackets and educational levels, the presence of representation across different age groups and educational statuses ensured the inclusivity of diverse perspectives. The variability in the number of years of religious profession further contributed to the sample's heterogeneity. This comprehensive representation underscores the potential for generalization of the study's findings to the broader population of women religious in Nigeria. Moreover, the diversity in apostolates represented in the sample population mitigated the risk of bias toward any particular type of ministry, enhancing the study's credibility and applicability across various contexts.

Table 5*Correlation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Dimensions of Psychological Wellbeing (PWB): Self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, Personal Growth, Purpose in life, Environmental mastery, and Autonomy.*

Variable		Self-acceptance	Positive relations with others	Personal growth	Purpose in life	Environmental Mastery	Autonomy
EI	Pearson Correlation	.232**	.252**	.276**	-.014	.250**	.233**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.803	.000	.000
	N	304	304	304	304	304	304

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 illustrates the relationship between emotional intelligence and different dimensions of psychological wellbeing, such as Self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, Personal Growth, Purpose in life, Environmental mastery, and Autonomy. The Pearson correlation coefficients reveal significant positive correlations between emotional intelligence and all psychological wellbeing dimensions, except Purpose in Life, which does not

show a significant correlation. Specifically, emotional intelligence exhibits moderate positive correlations with Self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, Personal growth, Environmental mastery, and Autonomy. These findings suggest that individuals with higher emotional intelligence levels tend to have higher levels of self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, personal growth, environmental mastery, and autonomy. The absence of a significant correlation with purpose in life implies that emotional intelligence may not directly impact individuals' sense of purpose. Understanding these correlations provides insights into how emotional intelligence relates to various aspects of psychological wellbeing and informs interventions aimed at enhancing psychological wellbeing through the development of emotional intelligence skills.

Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Wellbeing

To determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among women religious in Nigeria, the Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized to test the hypothesis regarding the variables. H_1 : There is a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing of Women Religious in Nigeria.

Table 6

Correlation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Psychological Wellbeing (PWB)

Variable		PWB
EI	Pearson Correlation	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	304

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing is displayed in Table 6 with a p-value of (0.000). When the p-value is less than the significance level ($\alpha=0.01$), the alternate hypothesis is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected (Zach, 2022).

The results showed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significant level of 0.01. Thus, the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between the participants' emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing, is accepted. This finding offered a response to the objective of the study by indicating that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among women religious in Nigeria. Having a strong positive relationship means that the higher the score in emotional intelligence, the higher the possibility of psychological wellbeing. On the other hand, the lower the score in emotional intelligence, the lower the possibility of psychological wellbeing. So, the higher the level of emotional intelligence of women religious in Nigeria, the higher their psychological wellbeing will be, and vice versa.

The outcome of this study is supported by the research findings in the reviewed literature by Makuloluwa and Arachhige (2015); Nag et al. (2023); Smith (2012); Olah and Utibe (2022) and Agu and Nwankwo (2019); which revealed that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. According to the results, emotional intelligence is critical to the improvement of psychological wellbeing and mental health of women religious in Nigeria. High emotional intelligence helps women religious in Nigeria form positive relationships, have a strong sense of self-worth, and abstain from harmful behaviors that compromise psychological wellbeing. The findings also demonstrated that increased emotional intelligence improves psychological wellbeing and organizational effectiveness. The implication is that women religious in Nigeria who possess stronger self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management have better psychological functioning and higher levels of life satisfaction in their religious vocation.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among women religious in Nigeria. The findings revealed that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between their emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. The results are in line with earlier reviews by Makuloluwa and Arachhige (2015); Nag et al. (2023); Smith (2012); Olah and Utibe (2022) and Agu and Nwankwo (2019); which revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. Thus, higher levels of emotional intelligence enable women religious in Nigeria to foster positive relationships, cultivate a strong sense of self-worth, and avoid behaviors that could negatively impact their well-being. Moreover, heightened emotional intelligence levels are associated with improved psychological wellbeing and organizational effectiveness. Consequently, women religious in Nigeria with greater emotional self-awareness, independence, assertiveness, and interpersonal skills are likely to experience improved psychological well-being and heightened life satisfaction.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The self-reporting methods employed in the data collection process may occasionally be influenced by social desirability or biases. Also, the questionnaire was distributed by email and WhatsApp using a Google Form because of the distance from the study area, as a result, those without access to digital devices and Internet services were left out of the study.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed for religious organizations and institutes to enhance the psychological wellbeing of Women Religious in Nigeria, promoting their emotional intelligence and enhancing their fulfillment and effectiveness in their religious vocations.

Emotional Intelligence Training and Support for Educational Advancement: Implement programs focusing on emotional intelligence development and educational opportunities to equip Women Religious with skills in self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social interaction, empowering them to attain advanced academic qualifications and potentially boosting their psychological wellbeing.

Fostering Positive Relationships and Integration of Purposeful Activities: Create environments conducive to building positive relationships among Women Religious by encouraging social interaction, collaboration, and support networks within religious communities. Incorporate purpose-driven activities and initiatives to cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning in life among Women Religious, positively impacting their psychological wellbeing and satisfaction.

Promotion of Environmental Mastery and Continuous Evaluation and Support: Provide resources and support for Women Religious to navigate challenges, develop coping strategies, and gain a sense of control and competence in their roles. Regularly assess emotional intelligence levels and psychological wellbeing among Women Religious to identify areas for improvement and provide ongoing support, feedback, and resources for personal and professional development, ensuring sustained psychological wellbeing within religious communities.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings of the current study and the existing literature, several avenues for further research are suggested to deepen understanding and explore additional aspects of the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing.

- i. Conducting longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of emotional intelligence on the psychological wellbeing of Women Religious.
- ii. Exploring the influence of cultural and contextual factors on the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing among Women Religious in Nigeria.

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