

Demographic Variables and Emotional Competency of Workers in Mechanical Technology Occupations in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

In recognition of the significant role that emotional intelligence plays in enhancing job performance in many occupations, the study sought to determine the influence of demographic variables on the emotional competencies of workers in mechanical technology occupations in South-South Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was adopted and the population consisted of 3,996 technicians in mechanical technology occupations in South-south Nigeria. A sample of 341 technicians comprising 188 auto-mechanics and 153 metal work technicians was selected through multi-stage stratified random sampling technique. Five research questions and seven null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 probability level. The Emotional Intelligence Inventory for Mechanical Technology Occupations (EIIMTO) developed by Udoudo (2014) was used for data collection. The EIIMTO has coefficient of internal consistency of 0.89 and coefficient of stability of 0.84. The data generated from the study were analysed using the mean, standard deviation, t-test and the two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The study found that there was a significant difference in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers with respect to their occupational area. The study also found that age, years of working experience, job status and marital status were not significant factors in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers. Furthermore, there was no interaction effect of age and experience as well as job status and marital status on the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers. It was recommended, among others, that personnel managers in mechanical technology related establishments should not discriminate workers on the basis of their demographic characteristics such as age, experience, job status and marital status during personnel selection and promotion, since this study has found that these demographic variables are not significant factors in the emotional competency of mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria.

Key Words: *Demographic variables, Emotional Competency, Mechanical Technology Occupations*

Introduction

The dynamic forces of globalization coupled with the rapid rate of technological changes have brought about increased demand for soft skills in the contemporary labour market one of

which is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and monitor one's own and others emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). It entails one's ability to recognize and understand emotions within one's self and others as well as appraise and regulate them in order to produce appropriate responses that lead to improved intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes (Udoudo, 2014). In a nutshell, one's ability to understand, manage and control his own and others emotions constitute emotional intelligence and a person who is able to do this effectively is said to be emotionally intelligent or emotionally competent.

According to Farris (nd), the need for individuals to control their emotions effectively has long been stressed since time immemorial by the famous philosopher, Aristotle when he said that "for someone to get angry is very easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way is not easy". Indeed, effective control of emotions in the workplace is positively associated with the overall performance of one's job. This is because when our emotions are at their peak, it becomes very difficult to stay focused on what is important (Farmer, nd). In addition, emotions shape every person's decisions and judgment at the workplace, as well as how each person acts towards others and their jobs (Stubbs, 2005).

Many models of emotional intelligence have been developed but this study is anchored on Goleman's mixed model which, according to Stubbs (2005) and McPheat (2010) is the most widely accepted model of emotional intelligence because it is more applicable to the workplace than other models. Goleman's mixed model of emotional intelligence consists of four domains namely self awareness, self regulation, social awareness and relationship management. The first two of these domains are termed intrapersonal or personal competencies while the last two are interpersonal or social competencies. Goleman (1998) further conceptualized emotional intelligence as consisting of twenty emotional competencies which he defined as learned capabilities based on emotional intelligence that result in superior performance at work. These emotional competencies are distributed among the four domains as depicted in Figure 1.

	INTRAPERSONAL COMPETENCIES	INTERPERSONAL OR SOCIAL COMPETENCIES
RECOGNITION	SELF AWARENESS Emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence.	SOCIAL AWARENESS Empathy, organizational awareness and service orientation.
REGULATION	SELF MANAGEMENT Emotional self control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, optimism and initiative.	RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT Developing others, inspirational leadership, influence and communication. Others are change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds and teamwork and collaboration.

Figure 1: Goleman's model of emotional intelligence

Goleman (1998) pointed out that each of the emotional competencies contributes to job performance and that one's level of emotional competencies shows how much of that potential one has translated into on the job capabilities. Cherniss (2000) therefore advocated that it is these emotional competencies that should be identified and measured if one wants to predict an individual's job performance as in this study.

Studies have shown that emotional competence enhance one's leadership and management skills (Stubbs, 2005), academic achievement (Olatoye, Akintunde and Yakasai, 2010) and also reduce conflict among workers in organisations (Adeyemo and Ogunyemi, 2005). Gresham (2010) posited that emotional competence enhance job performance and lead to career success in many occupations, including mechanical technology occupations. Mechanical technology occupations, according to Udouo (2014), are those occupations that utilise the principles and theories of science and technology to solve technical problems through the design, manufacture, operation and maintenance of industrial machinery, consumer products and other equipment and tools. Thus, it embraces such trades as agricultural implements and equipment mechanics work, automobile mechanics, mechanical engineering craft practice, welding and fabrication and foundry craft practice, among others (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Considering its nature, it is apparent that workers in mechanical technology occupations need a high level of emotional competencies for many reasons. Firstly, they require a high level of emotional self control since they work with such tools like spanners, hammers, chisels,

hacksaws and scribes which could be detrimental if thrown at someone at the slightest provocation. In addition, they require a high level of adaptability so that they can easily adjust to changes in technology, machine design and production processes. This underscores the need for having only emotionally competent workers in these occupations. Obviously, mechanical technology establishments would thrive if there are less emotional outburst from disruptive co-workers internally and less complaints from the public regarding rudeness and un-professional behaviours.

The need for assessing the emotional competencies of mechanical technology personnel is justified by Chapman's (2009) assertion that emotional competence is widely recognized as an important consideration in human resources planning, job profiling as well as personnel selection and promotion. McPheat (2010) have established that personnel selection based on high level of emotional competency always lead to increase in job performance and turnover rate. McPheat specifically reported that when the United States Air Force and L'Oreal Company used an emotional intelligence test in their recruitment process, they found that recruits who performed best were those who scored highest on the emotional competency test.

Several studies have shown that the emotional competency of workers in some occupations is largely influenced by their demographic characteristics. For instance, Oladeji (2011) reported that emotional competency of Nigerian police officers vary according to their age, gender and level of training. In contrast, Aremu and Tejumola (2008), found that the emotional competency of Nigerian police officers is not significantly influenced by their age, job status, marital status and years of working experience. Also, Castejon, Cantero and Perez's (2008) found that emotional competencies of university students vary according to their academic disciplines. In addition, Sanchez-Ruis, Perez-Gonzalez and Petrides (2010) reported that there is an interaction effect of gender and discipline on students' emotional competence. In view of this, the need to determine the influence of demographic variables on the emotional competencies of workers in mechanical technology occupations in South-south Nigeria becomes critical.

It is however regrettable that despite the wide recognition of emotional competency as an indispensable trait for predicting career success in many occupations, there appears to be limited attention on the assessment of the emotional competencies of workers in mechanical technology occupations in Nigeria, particularly, in the South-south geopolitical zone. In addition, although

many studies have been conducted on the influence of demographic variables on emotional competencies of workers in many occupations, there is ample literature evidences that not much studies has been done with respect to mechanical technology occupations in South-south Nigeria. Therefore the major problem of this study was to answer the question: How does demographic variables influence the emotional competencies of workers in mechanical technology occupations in South-South Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study:

The study was designed to determine the influence of demographic variables on the emotional competencies of workers in mechanical technology occupations in South-south Nigeria. Specifically, it sought to achieve five objectives and to provide answers to five research questions as follows:

1. How does the emotional competency of Mechanical Technology workers in South-South Nigeria vary according to their occupational area?
2. How does age influence the emotional competencies of Mechanical Technology workers in South-South Nigeria?
3. How does year of working experience influence the emotional competencies of mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria?
4. How does job status influence the emotional intelligence competencies of mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria ?
5. How does marital status influence the emotional intelligence competencies of mechanical Technology workers in South-South Nigeria ?

In addition, seven null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 probability level:

- Ho₁:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean emotional competency scores of Metalwork and Automobile mechanics technicians in South-South Nigeria.
- Ho₂:** Age is not a statistically significant factor in the mean Emotional competency scores of Mechanical Technology workers in South-South Nigeria
- Ho₃:** Years of working experience is not a statistically significant factor in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria
- Ho₄:** There is no interaction effect of age and years of experience on the mean Emotional competency scores of Mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria

- Ho5:** Job status is not a statistically significant factor in the mean Emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria
- Ho6:** Marital status is not a statistically significant factor in the mean Emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria
- Ho7:** There is no interaction effect of job status and marital status on the mean Emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers in South-South Nigeria

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used in the study and it was carried out in South-south Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of 3,996 registered technicians in mechanical technology occupations in South-south Nigeria. In compliance with Krejice and Morgan's (1970) sampling model, a sample of 341 technicians was selected through a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique. The Emotional Intelligence Inventory for Mechanical Technology Occupations (EIIMTO) in South-south Nigeria developed by Udoudo (2014) was used for data collection. The EIIMTO which contained 34 emotional competency items and has coefficient of internal consistency of 0.89 and coefficient of stability of 0.84 assessed the subjects on four factors namely emotional-awareness and expression, perseverance and emotional-resilience, self-confidence and conscientiousness as well as flexibility and sociability. The data generated from the study were analysed using the mean, standard deviation, t-test and two-way analysis of variance.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question 1: Data related to research question 1 is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Comparison of Emotional Competency of Mechanical Technology Workers in South-South Nigeria when Classified by Occupational Area

EIIMTO Cluster	Auto-mechanics (N = 188)		Metalworkers (N = 153)	
		SD		SD
Emotional awareness and Expression	4.21	0.59	4.32	0.39
Perseverance and emotional Resilience	4.01	0.68	4.24	0.42
Self-confidence and Conscientiousness	4.13	0.76	4.37	0.40

Flexibility and Sociability	4.09	0.87	4.32	0.40
TOTAL	4.11	0.61	4.31	0.31

The result on Table 1 shows that metalwork technicians have higher mean scores on all the four clusters of the EIIMTO. They also have a higher overall mean score of 4.31 which is higher than that of auto-mechanics technicians who had overall mean score of 4.11. This implies that metalwork technicians in the sample had a higher level of emotional intelligence than auto-mechanics technicians.

Research Question 2: Data for answering research question 2 is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Comparison of Emotional Competency Mechanical Technology Workers in South-South Nigeria when Classified by Age

EIIMTO Cluster	Below 20 yrs (N = 72)		20 – 29 yrs (N = 60)		30 – 39 yrs (N = 121)		40 yrs + (N = 88)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Emotional awareness and expression	4.26	0.52	4.24	0.53	4.26	0.50	4.26	0.54
Perseverance and emotional resilience	4.12	0.65	4.19	0.50	4.08	0.58	4.09	0.61
Self- confidence and Conscientiousness	4.19	0.76	4.21	0.58	4.21	0.59	4.26	0.59
Flexibility and sociability	4.23	0.91	4.21	0.83	4.25	.653	4.11	0.57
TOTAL	4.20	0.58	4.21	0.51	4.20	0.47	4.18	0.50

As depicted in Table 2, respondents in the different age brackets obtained different scores in the various clusters of the EIIMTO. Generally, respondents aged between 20 to 29 years obtained the highest overall mean score of 4.21. The different scores obtained by mechanical technology workers in the different age brackets imply that emotional competency is influenced by age.

Research Question 3: Data for answering research question 3 is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Comparison of Emotional Competency Mechanical Technology Workers when Classified by Years of Working Experience

EIIMTO Cluster	1 - 10 yrs (N = 79)		11 – 20 yrs (N = 109)		21 – 30 yrs (N = 110)		31 yrs + (N = 43)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Emotional-awareness and expression	4.28	0.53	4.25	0.44	4.21	0.60	4.33	0.44
Perseverance and								

emotional resilience	4.16	0.64	4.07	0.51	4.12	0.59	4.08	0.67
Self-confidence and Conscientiousness	4.17	0.77	4.27	0.54	4.23	0.65	4.31	0.53
Flexibility and Sociability	4.28	0.02	4.16	0.52	4.16	.670	4.24	0.57
TOTAL	4.23	0.61	4.19	0.37	4.18	0.56	4.23	0.47

Table 3 shows that respondents whose experience is 31 years and above had the highest mean in the first and third clusters while those with 1 to 10 years of experience scored highest in the second and fourth clusters of the EIIMTO. Generally, respondents who have spent 1 to 10 years and those with 31 years of experience and above had the highest overall mean of 4.23 as against 4.19 and 4.18 by the other groups. This implies that emotional intelligence increases with one's years of experience on the job.

Research Question 4: Data for answering research question 4 is presented in Table 4

Table 4: Comparison of Emotional Competency of Mechanical Technology Workers in South-South Nigeria when Classified by Job Status

EIIMTO Cluster	Master (N = 121)		Apprentice (N = 117)		Journeyman (N = 103)	
	Mean (X = 4.27)	SD (S = 0.53)	Mean (X = 4.27)	SD (S = 0.56)	Mean (X = 4.22)	SD (S = 0.46)
Emotional awareness and expression	4.27	0.53	4.27	0.56	4.22	0.46
Perseverance and emotional Resilience	4.09	0.59	4.10	0.68	4.16	0.45
Self-confidence and conscientiousness	4.26	0.56	4.17	0.73	4.28	0.60
Flexibility and sociability	4.10	0.55	4.24	0.93	4.24	0.57
TOTAL	4.18	0.47	4.20	0.59	4.22	0.45

The result on Table 4 shows that master-craftsmen and apprentices obtain the highest mean score of 4.27 in the emotional-awareness and expression cluster while journey-men had the highest mean score in the perseverance and emotional resilience as well as in the self-confidence and conscientiousness cluster. In all, journey-men had the highest overall mean score ($X = 4.22$, $SD = 0.45$) than the master craftsmen or oga ($X = 4.18$, $SD = 0.47$) and apprentice ($X = 4.20$, $SD = 0.59$). This implies that emotional intelligence vary according to job status with journey-men possessing higher emotional competency than others

Research Question 5: Data for answering research question 5 is presented in Table 5

Table 5: Comparison of Emotional Competency Scores of Mechanical Technology Workers in South-South Nigeria When Classified by Marital Status

EIIMTO Cluster	Singles (N = 141)		Married (N = 160)		Widower (N = 19)		Divorced/ Separated (N = 21)	
	Mean CN = 1.4	SD	Mean CN = 1.6	SD	Mean CN = 1.1	SD	Mean CN = 2	SD
Emotional-awareness and Expression	4.21	0.54	4.28	0.50	4.37	0.45	4.25	0.58
Perseverance and Emotional Resilience	4.11	0.64	4.11	0.54	4.13	0.43	4.13	0.67
Self-confidence and Conscientiousness	4.19	0.74	4.26	0.57	4.38	0.28	4.2	0.60
Flexibility and sociability	4.25	0.88	4.13	0.57	4.35	0.33	4.13	0.54
TOTAL	4.19	0.58	4.20	0.46	4.31	0.29	4.18	0.52

As depicted in table 5, widowers scored highest in all the four clusters. The result also shows that respondents who are divorced or separated had the same mean score with the widowers in the perseverance and emotional resilience cluster. Generally, widowers had the highest overall mean score of 4.31 as against 4.19, 4.20 and 4.18 by the singles, married and the divorced/separated respectively. This showed that emotional intelligence vary according to marital status with widowers having a higher emotional competency than others.

Testing of Hypotheses

Ho 1: Data analysis related to hypothesis one is presented in Table 6

Table 6: Test for Significant Difference in the Mean Emotional Competency Scores of Mechanical Technology Workers in South-South Nigeria when classified by Occupational Area

EIIMTO Cluster	Auto-Mechanics (N = 188)		Metal Workers (N = 153)		df	t	Sig. of t
	Mean CN = 1.1	SD	Mean CN = 1.2	SD			
Emotional awareness and Expression	4.21	0.59	4.32	0.39	339	-1.96	0.05*
Perseverance and emotional Resilience	4.01	0.68	4.24	0.42	339	-3.73	0.00*
Self-confidence and Conscientiousness	4.13	0.76	4.37	0.40	339	-3.39	0.001*
Flexibility and Sociability	4.09	0.87	4.32	0.40	339	-3.07	0.002*
TOTAL	4.11	0.61	4.31	0.31	339	-3.70	0.00*

*P .05

The result of the t-test analysis on Table 6 shows that the values of p on all the four clusters of the EIIMTO were lower than or equal to the acceptable error level of 0.05. On this basis, the

null hypothesis is rejected implying that there is a significant difference in the mean emotional competency scores of metalwork and automobile mechanics technicians. This difference is in favour of the metal work technicians who obtained a higher mean score in all the clusters as well as higher overall mean score than auto mechanics technicians.

Ho 2, Ho 3 and Ho 4 are tested with the two-way analysis of variance presented in table 7.

Table 7: Test for Significant Difference and Interaction Effect of Age and Experience on Emotional Competency of Mechanical Technology Workers

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	1.69	12	0.14	0.54	0.89
Intercept	2716.42	1	2716.42	10424.87	0.00
Age	0.16	3	0.05	0.20	0.90
Experience	0.05	3	0.02	0.07	0.98
Age * Experience	1.48	6	0.25	0.95	0.46
Error	85.47	328	0.26		
Total	6101.71	341			
Corrected Total	87.16	340			

The result of the two-way analysis of variance which tested for significant difference in emotional competency according to age and years of experience as well as the interaction effect of age and experience on emotional competency of mechanical technology workers is presented in Table 7. As shown, the level of significance for age is 0.90, that of experience is 0.98 while that of the interaction effect of age and experience on emotional competency is 0.46. Since the levels of significance in all the three cases are higher than the acceptable error level of 0.05, the three null hypotheses are therefore upheld.

Ho5, Ho 6 and Ho 7 are tested with the two-way analysis of variance presented in table 8.

Table 8: Test for Significant Difference and Interaction Effect of Job Status and Marital Status on Emotional Competency of Mechanical Technology Workers

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	0.84	9	0.09	0.36	0.95
Intercept	1722.27	1	1722.27	6604.35	0.00
Job status	0.09	2	0.05	0.17	0.84
Marital status	0.15	3	0.05	0.19	0.90
Job status*Marital Status	0.42	4	0.11	0.41	0.80

Error	86.32	331	0.26
Total	6101.71	341	
Corrected Total	87.16	340	

Table 8 shows the result of the two-way analysis of variance conducted to test for significant difference in emotional competency according to job status and marital status as well as the interaction effect of job status and marital status on emotional competency of mechanical technology workers. As shown, the F-value for job status is 0.17 with level of significance of 0.84. The corresponding figures for marital status are 0.19 and 0.90 while that of the interaction effect of job status and marital status on emotional competency are 0.41 and 0.80 respectively. Since the levels of significance in the three cases are higher than the acceptable error level (0.05), the three null hypotheses are therefore upheld.

Discussion of Findings

The study made many interesting findings on the influence of demographic variables on emotional competency of workers in Mechanical Technology occupations. The study found that the mean emotional competency scores of metalwork technicians was higher than that of auto-mechanics technicians in all the clusters of the EIIMTO. The t-test analysis confirmed that the difference was high enough to be significant implying that emotional competence of mechanical technology workers is influenced by their occupational area. This finding that there is a significant difference in emotional competency according to occupational area is in agreement with that of Sanchez-Ruiz, Perez-Gonzalez and Petrides (2010) who reported that there is a difference in emotional intelligence profile among students from five different university faculties. The finding of this study also supports that of Castejon, Cantero and Perez (2008) who found that there was significant difference in socio-emotional competency profile among university students from different disciplinary areas.

The study also found that age was not a significant factor in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers. Although there was a slight difference in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers in majority of the clusters of the EIIMTO with respect to their age, the result of the two-way analysis of variance however reveals that the difference was not high enough to be significant. This finding contradicts the popular belief among Africans that maturity (be it intellectual or emotional)

comes with age. This finding could be explained by the fact that since emotional intelligence is a learned ability, mechanical technology workers of various age brackets could acquire the same level of emotional competency. This finding is in agreement with that of Aremu and Tejumola (2008) who reported that age was an insignificant factor in the emotional competency of Nigerian police officers.

With respect to years of working experience, the study found that there was no significant difference in the mean emotional competency scores of more experienced and less experienced mechanical technology workers. This finding is in agreement with that of Aremu and Tejumola (2008) who reported that years of working experience of Nigerian police officers was an insignificant factor in their emotional intelligence. The finding however contradicts that of Oladeji (2011) who found that level of training of Nigerian policemen contributed to their level of emotional intelligence

Another interesting finding of the study is that job status was not a significant factor in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers. This implies that every mechanical technology worker, whether he is the master craftsman, journeyman or apprentice, have the same level of emotional intelligence. This finding is in consonance with that of Aremu and Tejumola (2008) who found that job status was an insignificant factor in the emotional competency of Nigerian police officers. The finding of the study that job status is not a significant factor in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers however contradicts that of Oladeji (2011) who found that Nigerian policemen of the rank of Chief superintendent of police (CSP) to Assistant commissioner of police (ACP) obtained higher mean emotional intelligence scores than those on the ranks of Assistant superintendent of police (ASP), the inspectors and the rank and file.

Another salient finding of the study was that marital status was not a significant factor in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers. Though a slight difference was found in the mean emotional competency scores of mechanical technology workers with respect to their marital status as reported in table 5, this was not confirmed in the two way analysis of variance which revealed that the difference was not high enough to be significant. This finding supported the work of Aremu and Tejumola (2008) who reported that marital status was an insignificant factor in the emotional intelligence of Nigerian police officers.

The study conducted the two-way analysis of variance to test for the interaction effects of age and experience as well as job status and marital status on emotional competence of mechanical technology workers. The findings of this study clearly and unambiguously demonstrated that there is no interaction effect of these demographic variables on emotional competence, implying that the emotional competence of mechanical technology workers is not influenced by the interaction effect of age and years of working experience or job status and marital status.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

1. Personnel managers in public and private enterprises should endeavour to assess the emotional competencies of their staff for personnel selection and promotion purposes for all mechanical technology jobs.
2. During personnel selection and promotion, mechanical technology workers should not be discriminated on the basis of their demographic characteristics such as age, experience, job status and marital status since it has been found that these variables are not significant factors in the emotional competency of mechanical technology workers.
3. The Federal and state ministries of trade and industries in collaboration with the National Automobile Technicians Association (NATA) and National Welders and Fitters Association should organize soft skills training programmes for mechanical technology technicians. This would enable the technicians, particularly auto mechanics whose level of emotional competence was found to be lower than their metalwork counterparts to improve their level of emotional competencies.

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