

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES IN RIVERS STATE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND REHABILITATION

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Abstract

This study examined the role of emotional intelligence in social welfare services in Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. It was guided by two research questions and two objectives. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory was adopted. The study was a descriptive survey research design and was carried out at Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. A sample size of 400 respondents was gotten through Taro Yamane formula. The method of data collection was both primary and secondary data. The frequency table and simple percentage was used to analyze the bio-data of the respondents, while the mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the research questions. The study found that there is a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and the performance of social welfare workers in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. The study identified several strategies that can significantly enhance emotional competence, reduce burnout, and improve the quality of social welfare service delivery in Rivers State. The study therefore recommends that: there should be regular workshops and training sessions, establish a supportive work environment, introduce regular reflective supervision sessions and create platforms for social workers to share experiences and best practices on emotional intelligence and service delivery.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Social Welfare Service, Ecological System Theory.

1. Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and social welfare services are interconnected fields with profound implications for both service providers and recipients. Emotional intelligence, a concept popularized by Daniel Goleman and rooted in earlier psychological theories, involves the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively (Salovey & Mayer, 2000). According to Mayer et.al (2008) emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity to perceive,

understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others, and to use this information to guide thinking and behavior. The concept was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer in 1990 and later popularized by Goleman (1995). EI encompasses five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. EI can be measured through various tools, such as the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal, the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), and self-report questionnaires. Each tool offers different insights into an individual's emotional abilities and competencies.

Social welfare services, on the other hand, are designed to support individuals and families in need, providing resources and interventions to improve their well-being. Understanding the role of EI in social welfare can enhance service delivery, improve client outcomes, and support social workers in managing the emotional demands of their roles (Healy, 2005). Social welfare services encompass a range of programs and interventions designed to support individuals and families facing various challenges. These services include financial assistance, healthcare, housing support, counseling, and social support programs. The goal is to improve the quality of life for those in need and promote social justice (Levine & Pugh, 2002). According to Kershaw (2016) the development of social welfare services can be traced back to ancient civilizations, but modern social welfare systems began to take shape in the early 20th century. Key milestones include the establishment of social security systems, public health initiatives, and various social support programs aimed at addressing poverty, inequality, and other social issues.

Emotional Intelligence is crucial for social welfare service as it impacts their ability of a social worker to effectively engage with clients, manage stress, and maintain professional relationships. High EI helps social workers navigate the emotional complexities of their clients' situations, improve communication, and provide empathetic support (Cherniss, 2010). Social workers with high EI are better equipped to understand and respond to their clients' emotional needs. This capability can lead to improved client outcomes, including enhanced emotional well-being, better adherence to treatment plans, and more effective interventions (Garbarino, 2012).

To Goleman (2018) integrating emotional intelligence into social welfare practice can enhance the effectiveness of service delivery. Emotional intelligence training for social workers can improve their skills in managing client relationships, resolving conflicts, and providing support, leading to more effective service outcomes. Matthews et.al (2002) explained that measuring emotional intelligence in the context of social welfare services presents challenges, including the need for reliable and valid assessment tools. Ensuring accurate measurement of EI is essential for understanding its impact and effectiveness. Implementing emotional intelligence training and integrating it into social welfare practices according to Cherniss and Goleman (2011) require significant investment and commitment. Developing effective training programs and ensuring their adoption can be challenging but is crucial for enhancing service delivery. The application of emotional intelligence in social welfare services must consider cultural and contextual factors. Different cultural backgrounds and social contexts can influence how EI is perceived and utilized in practice.

2. Statement of the Problem

Social welfare professionals are frequently exposed to emotionally demanding situations involving vulnerable populations such as abused children,

persons with disabilities, the elderly, and victims of domestic violence. This emotional intensity often leads to stress, burnout, and diminished service quality if not properly managed. Emotional intelligence (EI) the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions has been shown to enhance job performance, empathy, and client satisfaction across various professional contexts (Mikolajczak et al., 2015; Chan, 2006).

The effectiveness of social welfare services in Rivers State, Nigeria, is critical to addressing the complex socio-economic challenges faced by vulnerable populations. However, there is a significant concern that the current state of social welfare services is compromised by the insufficient emotional intelligence of social workers. Emotional intelligence, which encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions and the emotions of others, is essential for social workers who deal with clients in distressing and emotionally charged situations (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The problem is exacerbated by several factors, including inadequate training programs that fail to prioritize the development of emotional intelligence skills, poor working conditions that lead to burnout and high turnover rates among social workers, and the overall lack of emphasis on emotional intelligence in the social welfare sector in Rivers State. As a result, social workers may struggle to engage empathetically with clients, manage their own stress, and make decisions that promote the well-being of those they serve.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that social welfare workers in Rivers State are often overburdened with caseloads, underpaid, and subjected to poor working conditions. These factors contribute to burnout and high turnover rates, which can negatively affect their emotional intelligence and, consequently, their performance. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of structured training programs focused on enhancing the emotional intelligence of social workers in the region. While professional training often emphasizes technical competencies, the development of emotional intelligence skills is not given equal priority. This gap in training may result in social workers who are technically proficient but lack the emotional resilience and interpersonal skills necessary to handle the emotional demands of their roles effectively (Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare, 2022).

Moreover, the impact of low emotional intelligence among social workers extends beyond individual performance; it affects the overall quality of social welfare services in Rivers State. Clients of social welfare services are often vulnerable individuals who require not only material support but also emotional understanding and compassion (Schutte, et.al, 2018). When social workers lack the ability to empathize, regulate their own emotions, or manage client relationships effectively, the quality of care provided diminishes, leading to dissatisfaction among clients and potentially worsening their situations. This scenario underscores the need to explore the role of emotional intelligence in social welfare service delivery and to identify strategies for enhancing these skills among social workers in Rivers State (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2012).

Abraham (2020) study investigated how emotional intelligence (EI) influences the performance of social welfare service. It found that social workers with high EI were better able to manage stress, build rapport with clients, and resolve conflicts effectively. These skills were directly linked to improved client outcomes and job performance. Grant and Kinman (2018) study explored the relationship between EI and resilience in social welfare service. It concluded that higher levels of EI were associated with better stress management and coping strategies, reducing burnout

and improving service delivery. EI training was recommended as part of professional development for social workers. Clarke and Mahoney (2019) study assessed how EI impacts ethical decision-making among social workers. The study revealed that EI aids in understanding clients' emotions and perspectives, leading to more empathetic and ethically sound decisions. Adams and Forbes (2021) study examined the role of EI in leadership within social welfare organizations. Leaders with high EI were found to foster more collaborative and motivated work environments, enhancing team performance and service delivery. A study by Mikolajczak et al. (2015) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance among social workers. It found that higher emotional intelligence significantly predicted better stress management, greater empathy, and improved decision-making, all of which enhanced overall service delivery. The study used a sample of 197 social workers and utilized the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue).

Empirical evidence suggests that emotional intelligence significantly reduces burnout and improves conflict resolution skills among social service providers (Joseph & Newman, 2010; Schutte et al., 2001). However, despite these global insights, there is a paucity of empirical data focusing specifically on how emotional intelligence influences social welfare service delivery in Nigeria, particularly in Rivers State. The Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation operates in a highly sensitive and complex environment, often dealing with socially and emotionally distressed clients. Yet, it remains unclear whether emotional intelligence is being recognized, assessed, or developed as a core competency among its workers.

This gap in local research raises critical questions: To what extent does emotional intelligence influence the effectiveness of social welfare services in Rivers State? Are social workers equipped with the emotional intelligence skills necessary to manage their responsibilities effectively? Without empirical evidence in the local context, policies and capacity-building efforts risk being misaligned with the actual needs of the workforce. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and the quality of social welfare service delivery in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. The goal is to provide data-driven insights that can inform training, hiring, and support mechanisms for social welfare professionals in the state.

Based on the foregoing, this study therefore seeks answers to the following questions:

To what extent does emotional intelligence (self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation and social skills) influence the performance of social welfare workers in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation?

What strategies can be adopted to enhance emotional intelligence among social welfare personnel for improved service outcomes?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and social welfare services in Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

Examine the influence of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation and social skills) on the performance of social welfare workers in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation.

Find out the strategies for enhancing emotional intelligence among social welfare staff for more effective service delivery.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Ecological system theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner which posits that individuals interact with multiple layers of their environment, including immediate settings like family and work (microsystem), broader social contexts like communities and institutions (mesosystem), and overarching societal factors (macrosystem). In the context of social welfare services, social workers operate within these layers and must navigate complex interactions across these systems. Emotional intelligence enables social workers to effectively manage and respond to these diverse environmental influences, enhancing their ability to provide appropriate and empathetic support.

Emotional intelligence helps social workers to advocate effectively for systemic changes and support clients in navigating complex bureaucratic systems, leading to more impactful interventions (Haeberle, 2012). The theory assumes that individuals are continuously interacting with and being influenced by multiple environmental systems. This interaction is dynamic and bidirectional, meaning that changes in one system can affect other systems and vice versa. It assumes that an individual's behavior and well-being are shaped by their immediate and broader environmental contexts. This includes family dynamics, community resources, and societal norms, all of which can influence and be influenced by the emotional intelligence of social workers.

The theory assumes that different environmental systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem) are interdependent. Social workers must navigate these interdependencies, using emotional intelligence to manage their roles within these systems and effectively support clients. It assumes a holistic perspective, recognizing that individual issues cannot be fully understood or addressed in isolation from the broader environmental context. Emotional intelligence aids in integrating this perspective by helping social workers perceive and manage the multiple layers of client and systemic interactions.

4. Conceptual Review

Concept of Emotional Intelligence

One of the hall marks of a mature mind is the ability to control the emotions. This is why Onyekuru and Ugwu (2017) opined that emotional imbalance does no good to anyone. Intelligence quotient is usually equated with success but, the most important element of intelligence is the ability to make one's way in a complex world by being able to relate with people and the environment successfully. This element of intelligence is termed "emotional intelligence which has been variously defined.

Some scholars for instance, see emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions, so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey 1997). However as observed and defined by Egbule (2009), emotional intelligence is the ability to validate reason with emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought. Thus, this implies the ability to utilize emotional knowledge to accurately perceive, understand, generate, access and assist feelings or emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Goleman (1995) defines EI as the capacity to recognize and manage one's

own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, to guide thinking and behavior. This concept builds on earlier research by Peter Salovey and Mayer (1990), who originally conceptualized EI as a form of intelligence that involves emotional awareness and regulation. Emotional intelligence (EI) can be defined as the ability to identify, express, understand, manage, and use emotions sensibly (Ingram, 2013, 2015; Kotsou et al., 2019; Morrison, 2007; Stanley and Mettilda, 2020). It involves both cognitive as well as emotional dimensions. EI has also been defined as 'Being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope' (Morrison, 2007). There are many situations that can trigger emotions in social work because it involves such dilemmas as trauma, suffering, violence, abuse, different kinds of exposure, and vulnerability (Douglas, 2013; Horwitz, 2018).

Given how central emotions and power relationships are to the social work task, and also given the recent growth in EI literature generally, it seems that the discussion about the potential relevance of EI in the field is overdue (Furnham, 2009; Morrison, 2007). Ingram (2013, 2015) work emphasises that a social worker would need to be able to hear, understand, and manage the perspectives and emotions of a service user in order to be in a position to establish and maintain trust. According to Morrison (2007), interest in and conviction about the relevance of a theory often 'come alive' when a connection is made with lived experience, and it would be somewhat incongruent to write a paper on the relevance of EI without individual reflections. To that end, I analyse my own experiences as a researcher, social worker, and educator in social work to discuss emotional aspects of the work as a part of critical reflection in relation to social work research and practice.

Components of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a psychological construct that refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in themselves and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). One of the most widely accepted models of emotional intelligence is that proposed by Daniel Goleman (1995, 1998), which outlines five core components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These components interact to enhance interpersonal functioning, decision-making, stress management, and professional performance, especially in emotionally demanding roles like social work and caregiving (Goleman, 1998; Bar-On, 2006). Goleman (2008) stated that Emotional Intelligence is often broken down into several key components, each contributing to effective emotional functioning and interpersonal relationships.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately recognize and understand one's emotions, moods, and drives, and how they affect other people. It forms the foundation of emotional intelligence because individuals must be aware of their emotional states before they can regulate them or empathize with others (Goleman, 1995).

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation refers to the ability to manage or redirect disruptive emotions and impulses and to adapt to changing circumstances. It involves controlling one's internal states, impulses, and resources (Goleman, 1998).

Motivation

Motivation within the context of emotional intelligence refers to an internal

drive to achieve goals for personal reasons rather than external rewards. This intrinsic motivation leads to persistence, commitment, and the passion to work toward goals despite setbacks (Goleman, 1998).

Empathy

Empathy is the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others. It is the most socially oriented component of emotional intelligence and is essential for professionals working with vulnerable populations (Bar-On, 2006).

Social Skills

Social skills refer to the ability to manage relationships effectively, including influencing others, managing conflict, inspiring leadership, and effective communication (Goleman, 1995).

Although distinct, these five components are interrelated. For instance, self-awareness is a prerequisite for self-regulation; one must recognize their emotional state before managing it. Similarly, empathy and social skills often work in tandem to enhance communication and relationship management. In sum, mastery of these components enables professionals to manage both personal and interpersonal challenges more effectively.

Social Welfare Service

Social welfare services refer to a range of programs and interventions designed to support individuals and families in need, aiming to enhance their well-being and improve their quality of life. These services are provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations and encompass various forms of assistance, including financial aid, counseling, and social support. Social welfare services are designed to address various social issues such as poverty, unemployment, mental health, and family dysfunction. The goal is to provide support that enables individuals to achieve stability, self-sufficiency, and improved quality of life (Midgley, 2006).

In Nigerian history, social welfare dates back to the colonial era, immediately following World War II, when missionary organisations provided some social welfare services for the weaker communities. These organisations, which included the Green Triangle, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Salvation Army, were among the first to provide social welfare services in the nation. They achieved this by constructing poor orphanages. Despite the fact that their operations began in Lagos, they have since extended to other parts of Nigeria. Additionally, the responsibility for managing social welfare programmes was transferred to the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development with the creation of new states; however, before this, social welfare programmes and social work were managed and run by the social department division in the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

However, traditional social work methods were used in Nigeria in pre-colonial rule, and these stopped a number of social vices that are still prevalent today. With the advent of western civilisation in Nigeria in the 1970s, social issues such as child abandonment, armed robbery, cultism, and kidnapping increased (Brian, 2017). Due to this social ill, numerous social welfare programmes were provided by the states and non-governmental organisations in order to safeguard the rights and requirements of the most vulnerable populations. For instance, whereas orphanage houses, welfare homes, and shelters for motherless kids are frequently seen in the southern region of Nigeria, the Almajiris children who freely

roam the streets as beggars are typically seen there. Inquiring individuals and families can adopt orphans who reside in orphanages. For the smooth running of their daily operations, these numerous vulnerable groups are totally dependent on donations from NGOs and private persons. In the northern region of Nigeria, since 2016, government reform initiatives have focused on rehabilitating, feeding, and teaching the Almajiris, who are frequently taken advantage of by criminals for social and criminal vices.

In January 2017, N575 million (\$1.1 million) was made available to feed schoolchildren in five states. However, given the population at stake, this is woefully insufficient, and sustainability is a major issue. Welfare services in public hospitals are paralysed. Sometimes, hospitals will pay for patients who have been released but are unable to pay their costs. Less than 5% of people have access to this. Due to inadequate funding, the needy may occasionally have to wait weeks after being released before receiving such parcels. The campaign against child labour is supported by NGOs. Several homes for the elderly are still working. They are overseen by the government and religious institutions. They are, however, underfunded. The widows and single parents are not formally covered. Juvenile courts remand delinquent children into temporary custody in correctional facilities (Brian, 2017).

Social welfare services represent a fundamental pillar of societal development, geared toward ensuring the well-being and quality of life of individuals and groups, particularly those who are vulnerable or marginalized. The services offered under the umbrella of social welfare are diverse, encompassing healthcare, housing, education, employment support, and protective services. Social welfare services are often state-sponsored but may also be provided by non-governmental organizations, faith-based institutions, and community-based entities.

Emotional Intelligence and Social Welfare Service

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and influence one's own emotions and the emotions of others (Goleman, 1995). Social welfare services, on the other hand, aim to promote social well-being by providing support to individuals and communities facing various challenges, such as poverty, healthcare needs, and social exclusion (Gray, 2019). While these two areas emotional intelligence and social welfare services may initially appear distinct, there is a significant relationship between the two, particularly in how emotional intelligence can enhance the effectiveness of social welfare professionals and improve service delivery.

According to Petrides and Furnham (2012) emotional intelligence is effective in social welfare service and can be viewed based on the following:

Enhancing Service Delivery

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in improving the effectiveness of social welfare services. Social workers with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle the emotional complexities of their clients, manage their own stress, and build strong therapeutic relationships (Cherniss, 2010).

Improving Client Interaction

Social workers' ability to empathize with clients, manage their own emotions, and communicate effectively can significantly impact the quality of client interactions. High EI enables social workers to understand clients' needs more

accurately and respond appropriately, thereby improving service outcomes.

Conflict Resolution and Stress Management

In social welfare settings, conflict resolution and stress management are essential skills. Emotional Intelligence helps social workers navigate conflicts with clients or colleagues and manage the emotional demands of their work. Effective EI can lead to better problem-solving and reduced burnout among social workers (Schutte et.al, 2018).

1. Methodology

Research Design

This study was a descriptive survey research design is adopted. According to Nworgu (2005) a descriptive survey studies the sampling of individual units from an already known population and its associated survey data collection techniques, such as questionnaire construction and methods for improving the number and accuracy of responses to survey.

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. The Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation is a government ministry of Rivers State, Nigeria entrusted with the implementation of programs and the provision of social, rehabilitative services to improve the physical, social, emotional and economic well-being of the disadvantaged groups in the state. The Ministry is currently headed by Commissioner of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Mrs. Inime Chinwenwo-Aguma.

Population for the Study

The population for the study consists of male and female staff in Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. According to the Human Resource Management of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation (2024) the total staff is one thousand three hundred and thirteen (1,313).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique: The sample size for the study is 400 respondents. The participants of this sample size are male and female staff. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size.

The calculation of Taro Yamane is shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size required

N = Number of population under study

e = allowed error (%)

From the above formula, the sample size will be calculated as thus;

$$n = \frac{1,313}{1 + 1,313 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1,313}{1 + 1,313 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{1,313}{1,314 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{1,313}{3.285}$$

n = 399.7 approximately 400

The study adopted the purposive sampling technique, to select five departments in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation which are: Social Welfare, Rehabilitation, Child Welfare, Administration and Planning, Research and Statistics. The study also adopted the proportionate sampling technique to allocate samples to the five selected departments. This was done to make sure every departments has a chance of been sampled.

Method of Data Collection

This study adopted both primary (quantitative) and secondary/documentary (qualitative) data. The primary data was collected from respondents through personally administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections: Section 1: Demographic information and Section 2: Items measuring the emotional intelligence of social workers in carrying out social welfare services. The items was measured using a Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). With the aid of two research assistants, the questionnaire was distributed and retrieved from the respondents. This ensures errors were eliminated in the field and increase response rate. The questionnaire was used so as to uphold the confidentiality of the participants. While the secondary data was sourced from already published and unpublished materials such as Journals, article, relevant textbooks, material from internet, etc.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data for the study was retrieved using descriptive statistics. Frequency tables and simple percentage was used to analysis the bio-data of the respondents, while the mean and standard deviation was used to analysis the research questions.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of four hundred (400), copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents whom were staff selected from 5 departments in the ministry of social welfare and rehabilitation, Rivers State. This was done to ensure a compressive result in this research work. Based on the return of questionnaire distributed a total of three hundred and eighty five (385) copies were returned, while fifteen (15) copies were not returned. This represents a return rate of 97%

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution Rate

S/ N	DEPARTMENT S	SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION	RETURN RATE	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	Social Welfare	115	112	28
2.	Rehabilitation	105	103	26
3.	Child Welfare	80	77	19.3
4.	Administration	55	53	13.3
5.	Planning	45	40	10
	Research and Statistics			
	TOTAL	400	385	97%

Source: Fieldwork Survey (2025)

The table above showed the questionnaire distribution rate of 400 and the return rate of 385.

Table 2: Respondents Distribution Table

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
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Male	271	70%
Female	114	30%
Total	385	100%
Age	Frequency	Percentage %
20 – 29	72	19%
30 – 39	142	37%
40 – 49	130	34%
50 – Above	41	10%
Total	385	100%
Working Experience	Frequency	Percentage %
1 – 5 yrs	15	4%
6 – 10 yrs	58	15%
11 – 15 yrs	74	19%
16 – 20 yrs	123	32%
21 yrs and above	115	30%
Total	385	100%

Source: Fieldwork Survey (2025)

The above in table 2 presented the gender distribution. The data revealed that 271 (70%) were male, while 114 (30%) were female. Give the total respondents to a figure of 385. This showed that majority of the respondents were male.

The age distribution of the respondents showed that 72 (19%) were 20-29 years, 142 (37%) were 30-39 years, 130 (34%) were 40-49 years and 41 (10%) were 50 years and above. This showed that majority of the respondents were 30-39 years.

The working experience of the respondents showed that 15 (4%) had 1-5 yrs, 58 (15%) had 6-10 yrs, 74 (19%) had 11-15 yrs, 123 (32%) had 16-20 yrs while 115 (30%) had 21 yrs and above working experience. This showed that majority of the respondents had 16 – 20 yrs working experience.

Research Question One: To what extent does emotional intelligence (self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation and social skills) influence the performance of social welfare workers in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation?

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on emotional intelligence influence and performance of social welfare workers
N = 385

SN	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	I am able to recognize and understand my own emotional state while interacting with clients.	2.60	.962	Accepted
2.	I manage to control my emotions effectively in stressful and challenging situations at work.	2.89	.931	Accepted
3.	I am capable of understanding the emotional needs of clients in distressing situations.	3.35	.681	Accepted
4.	I communicate with colleagues and clients to resolve conflicts or emotional challenges in my daily work.	2.51	.973	Accepted
5.	I am confident that my emotional intelligence (in terms of self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills) has a positive impact on my overall performance as a social welfare worker.	2.84	.942	Accepted
Grand Mean		3.07	.941	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork Survey (2025).

Table 3, presents response to research question one, revealing that response are more to the positive side. The item I am capable of understanding the emotional needs of clients in distressing situations scored the highest mean ($M=3.35$, $SD=.681$) Followed by the item I manage to control my emotions effectively in stressful and challenging situations at work with $M=2.89$, $SD=.931$. The item I am confident that my emotional intelligence (in terms of self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills) has a positive impact on my overall performance as a social welfare worker $M=2.84$, $SD=.942$. This is followed by a mean response of $M=2.60$, $SD=.962$ to the item I am able to recognize and understand my own emotional state while interacting with clients. The item with the lowest mean response of $M=2.51$, $SD=.973$ is I communicate with colleagues and clients to resolve conflicts or emotional challenges in my daily work. The grand mean was 3.07 with a standard deviation of .941.

Research Question Two: What strategies can be adopted to enhance emotional intelligence among social welfare personnel for improved service outcomes?

Table 4: Descriptive statistics on the strategies adopted to enhance emotional intelligence among social welfare personnel

N =385				
SN	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
6.	Training programs focused on increasing self-awareness and emotional recognition in social welfare workers.	2.71	.853	Accepted
7.	Reflective supervision, where social workers are encouraged to explore their emotional responses and decision-making processes in a non-judgmental environment.	3.41	.681	Accepted
8.	Creating an organizational culture that supports emotional expression, collaboration, and employee well-being was another recurring strategy.	3.02	.940	Accepted
9.	Workshops or interventions focusing on communication and conflict resolution skills would be for enhancing emotional intelligence in your daily work.	3.00	.832	Accepted
10.	The potential use of digital platforms such as webinars, e-learning modules, and mobile apps for self-paced emotional intelligence development.	3.17	.737	Accepted
Grand Mean		3.11	.954	Accepted

Source: Fieldwork Survey (2025).

Table 4, presents response to research question four, revealing that response are more to the positive side. Reflective supervision, where social workers are encouraged to explore their emotional responses and decision-making processes in a non-judgmental environment scored the highest mean ($M=3.41$, $SD=.681$). This is followed by a mean response of $M=3.17$, $SD=.737$ to the item the potential use of digital platforms such as webinars, e-learning modules, and mobile apps for self-paced emotional intelligence development. Followed by the item creating an organizational culture that supports emotional expression, collaboration, and

employee well-being was another recurring strategy with $M=3.02$, $SD=.940$. The item workshops or interventions focusing on communication and conflict resolution skills would be for enhancing emotional intelligence in your daily work $M=3.00$, $SD=.832$. The item with the lowest mean response of $M=2.71$, $SD=.853$ is training programs focused on increasing self-awareness and emotional recognition in social welfare workers. The grand mean was 3.11 with a standard deviation of .954.

2. Discussion of Findings

Extent Emotional Intelligence Influence the Performance of Social Welfare Workers

The findings of research question one revealed that emotional intelligence (EI) significantly influences the performance of social welfare workers in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation. Respondents demonstrated a strong correlation between their levels of emotional intelligence and their effectiveness in service delivery, client engagement, and professional collaboration. This finding aligns with Goleman's (1995) foundational view that emotional intelligence is more critical than IQ in determining workplace success. Social welfare workers who exhibited high emotional intelligence particularly in the domains of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills reported enhanced ability to handle emotionally charged client situations, resolve conflicts, and maintain a positive organizational environment.

Self-awareness, a core component of EI, was found to be particularly influential in the professional conduct of social workers. Workers who could identify and understand their own emotional responses were better at managing stress, making rational decisions, and avoiding emotional burnout. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), self-awareness allows individuals to accurately perceive their emotions and respond to them appropriately, which is vital in social service professions where empathy and judgment are frequently tested. Emotional regulation emerged as another crucial factor. Workers, who managed their emotions effectively, especially in crisis scenarios, reported higher job satisfaction and better task management. Empathy understanding and sharing the feelings of others was found to be central to client relationships. Social workers who rated themselves high in empathy tended to report better rapport with clients, particularly vulnerable groups such as the elderly, abused children, or individuals with disabilities. This confirms earlier research by Boyatzis et al. (2000) that emotional intelligence, especially empathy, fosters stronger interpersonal relationships and improves service outcomes in helping professions. The study also highlighted the role of social skills in facilitating collaboration and team performance. Respondents with high social competence noted better communication with colleagues and supervisors, fewer workplace conflicts, and more efficient service coordination. These observations align with findings by Cherniss (2010) who emphasized the role of EI in fostering team cohesion and organizational effectiveness in human service settings.

These findings underscore the importance of integrating emotional intelligence training into the professional development of social welfare workers. When social workers are emotionally competent, they are better equipped to meet the complex emotional demands of their roles, thus improving the overall quality of social welfare services. As recommended by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008), institutions should consider using validated EI assessment tools to evaluate and enhance the emotional competence of their staff.

Strategies to Enhance Emotional Intelligence among Social Welfare Personnel

Research question two conducted in the Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation identified several evidence-based strategies that can be adopted to improve the emotional intelligence of personnel, thereby enhancing the overall quality of service delivery. The discussion is anchored on the findings from field data and previous empirical literature.

A majority of the respondents emphasized the need for continuous professional development programs focusing on emotional intelligence. Regular workshops, seminars, and in-service training that target the five EI competencies self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills can significantly improve the emotional competence of social workers. This aligns with the findings of Clarke (2010) who argued that structured EI training fosters greater emotional self-control and interpersonal effectiveness in human service professions. Reflective supervision, where social workers are encouraged to explore their emotional responses and decision-making processes in a non-judgmental environment, was identified as a key strategy. Mentorship by more emotionally intelligent professionals can also serve as a model for developing EI. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), reflective practices improve emotional regulation and empathy among professionals working in emotionally intense environments such as social welfare. Creating an organizational culture that supports emotional expression, collaboration, and employee well-being was another recurring strategy. Respondents noted that emotionally intelligent behavior is more likely to thrive in settings that recognize and reward interpersonal skills and emotional labor. This supports Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013) who emphasized that organizational climates fostering compassion and trust enhance the development and application of EI among employees.

Integrating EI-related competencies into performance evaluation metrics was recommended by participants. This involves assessing attributes such as conflict resolution, interpersonal sensitivity, and emotional self-control as part of job performance reviews. According to Cherniss (2010), incorporating emotional intelligence measures into appraisal systems encourages accountability and reinforces the importance of EI in service delivery roles. The findings also indicated the potential of using digital platforms such as webinars, e-learning modules, and mobile apps for self-paced emotional intelligence development. These tools can offer interactive content, simulations, and assessments that help social workers improve their EI skills anytime, anywhere. Schutte and Malouff (2011) advocate for integrating online interventions in emotional intelligence education, especially in contexts where face-to-face training is constrained by time or resources.

The findings suggest that the enhancement of emotional intelligence among social welfare personnel requires a multi-pronged approach involving training, supportive environments, performance alignment, and technological tools. These strategies, when implemented holistically, not only improve the EI competencies of social workers but also significantly enhance the quality of services delivered to vulnerable populations. The Ministry of Social Welfare in Rivers State is advised to institutionalize these strategies through policy reforms and capacity-building programs. Investments in EI development can yield long-term benefits, including reduced burnout, better client relationships, and improved service outcomes.

3. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on the

performance of social welfare workers, the relationship between the components of EI and service delivery quality, the challenges workers face in applying EI, and strategies to enhance emotional competence in the workplace. Key findings revealed that emotional intelligence significantly influences the performance of social welfare personnel. The core components of EI self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills were strongly associated with improved service delivery, including better client engagement and effective conflict resolution. However, social workers face significant challenges in applying EI, such as high caseloads, emotional burnout, lack of institutional support, and inadequate training. To address these issues, strategies such as emotional intelligence training, reflective supervision, and improved workplace support were identified as crucial for building emotional competence and service efficiency.

The study concludes that emotional intelligence is a vital asset for effective and responsive social welfare service delivery. The ability of social workers to manage their own emotions and respond appropriately to clients' needs plays a crucial role in shaping service outcomes. The lack of structured training and support systems limits the development and application of EI among social welfare personnel. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence into social welfare policy and practice is essential for fostering professional excellence and enhancing the well-being of service users in Rivers State.

4. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

The Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation should provide regular workshops and training sessions on emotional intelligence skills, focusing on the key components of self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal skills.

Establish a supportive work environment through counseling services, peer mentoring, stress management programs, and adequate workload distribution to reduce burnout and emotional fatigue. Emotional intelligence indicators should be included in staff performance evaluations to emphasize its importance and encourage continuous development.

Introduce regular reflective supervision sessions where social workers can discuss emotional challenges faced on the job and receive constructive feedback from supervisors.

Create platforms for social workers to share experiences and best practices on emotional intelligence and service delivery, thereby fostering a community of learning and emotional growth.

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