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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND EMPATHY AS PREDICTORS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND AFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated effective communication and empathy as predictors of conflict resolution and affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State. The study adopted correlational research design. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select the sample of 400 SS2 students from the population of 29077 students in Abia State. The researcher developed three research instruments for data collection titled; Effective Communication Questionnaire (ECQ), Empathy Questionnaire (EQ) and Affective Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ). The instruments were face validated by three experts, two from Department of Guidance and Counselling (Educational Psychology Unit) and one from Science Education Department (Measurement and Evaluation Unit) respectively all from MOUAAU. The reliability of the three instruments were determined using Cronbach Alpha Method which yielded reliability values of 0.80 for the ECQ, 0.84 for the EEIQ and 0.75 for SEQ respectively. The instruments were administered to the students through the help of three research assistants. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to answer the research questions, while linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that effective communication significantly predicted affective engagement among students in Abia State as it negatively predicted 88.0% of the variance observed in affective engagement of students in Abia State. Empathy predicted 52.2% of the affective engagement of students in Abia State. Among others it was recommended that teachers should establish feedback mechanisms that allow students to express their thoughts and feelings so as to meet their communication needs.

Keywords: Effective communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, affective engagement and senior secondary school students.

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Introduction

In today's complex and dynamic society, senior secondary school students are constantly faced with conflicts and challenges that could have the potential of impacting their psychological well-being, social interaction, academic achievement and behavioural engagement. This is because they are different people coming from different homes with their different experiential

backgrounds and psychological makeups such as interests, attitudes, aptitudes, abilities, capabilities, potentials, strengths and weaknesses. As a result, their mechanisms for conflict resolutions and affective engagement in the school may differ.

Conflict resolution as conceptualized by Mailchimps (2025), is the process utilized by two or more parties to find a cordial solution to a problem. Similarly, American Management Association (2023), saw conflict resolution as a way to resolve an issue or problem between two or more people. Conflict resolution is the process of ending a dispute and reaching an agreement that satisfies all persons involved. Since conflict is an essential part of being human, effective conflict resolution is not designed to avoid disagreements. Instead, conflict resolution skills are used to facilitate discussions, increase understanding and control emotional responses (Jacob, 2022). Accordingly, Shonk (2025), opined that conflict resolution can be defined as the informal or formal process that two or more individuals adopt to find a peaceful solution to their dispute.

In the context of this paper, conflict resolution is a process whereby students resolve issues and concerns that could affect their academic achievement and behavioural engagement in the school. Conflicts are natural among senior secondary school students hence they shouldn't try to avoid. Instead they should work on their conflict resolution skills. Having good conflict resolution skills means they can resolve issues among themselves while still maintaining a healthy relationship to a problem or dispute in a positive way and still maintain a healthy and happy relationship with the other individuals involved.

Conflict resolution is important for maintaining healthy student teacher and student-student relationship. Strong conflict resolution skills help resolve disputes positively and maintain respectful and trusting relationships. According to Mailchimps (2025), important conflict resolution skills include active listening, open communication, avoiding blame, staying calm, and collaboration. According to the author, conflict resolution strategies include; negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and litigation could be helpful in managing conflicts effectively. Consequently, effective conflict resolution among senior secondary school students could lead to behavioural engagement among students.

Behavioural engagement is an aspect of school engagement that could be easily observed in the students' willingness to participate in the teaching and learning activities. affective engagement which entails the student emotional responses to learning activities including the exhibition of positive or negative attitudes and reactions towards schooling, academic activities, non-academic activities, teachers and classmates. It involves reactions, students show to the school and individuals in the school. It involves students' participation in the academic and extra-

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curricular activities of the school (Fredrick *et al* in Estevez *et al* 2021). Students with high level of affective engagement according to Srikrishna (2025), demonstrate dedication to their studies, and academic absorption leading to high academic achievement and better academic adjustment and learning experiences. A high level of behavioural engagement is related to motivation, perseverance and a sense of accomplishment, all which lead to student overall well-being.

Students with high level of affective engagement actively participate in the teaching and learning process as well as in other extra-curricular activities of the school due to their positive attitude towards schooling and learning experiences. Conversely, students with low level of affective engagement experience burnout, stress and decreased mental health (Srikrishna, 2025). Fredrick's *et al* (2019) identified. The affectively disengaged are the emotionally disengaged students who exhibit a negative attitude and reaction towards school and individuals in the school such as teachers and classmates.

Affective engagement is important in the overall development and academic achievement of secondary school students. According to Kizildag *et al* (2017), when the students are engaged in the school, they have positive feelings that contribute to their academic life by providing more positive school life. As noted by Barragan Martin *et al* (2021) high level of affective school engagement among students improve their competencies, skills and values required for academic excellence, it also reduces students' participation in negative behaviours while enabling them, to make a smooth transition to adulthood. Owolabi and Owolabi (2024), emphasized that student engagement contributes towards their tendency to retain academics knowledge as well as complete their programmes at record time. According to the authors, when the students are actively engaged in the school, they acquire experiential knowledge both in planned and unplanned learning programmes. Zhen *et al* in Lofti and Ashouri (2022), added that school engagement provides an obvious picture of the students' academic progress and failure. This may be true when the students engage in the educational process beginning from teaching and learning and progress to evaluation and feedback from the student's. In the assertions of DeToro *et al* (2023), when students are engaged, they perceive learning and school activities as meaningful, they become motivated and show sustained commitment towards their learning and future. Hence, they see schooling as being worthwhile and become fully involved into all the processes involved.

From the above discussions, it could be deduced that affective school engagement is important in the sense that it enables the students to actively participate in the school programmes which could impact their academic achievements and overall developments, especially when they exhibit a positive attitude towards schooling and learning experiences. The ultimate purpose of education is geared towards helping the students to achieve all round development and behaviour modification. However, the realization of the above aim of education may not be possible without students' active engagement in the school's academic and non-academic activities. As a cited in Michael and Michelle (2025), researches conducted by (Dyer 2015; Lie *et al* 2018; Rechmeyer 2019; Maamin *et al* (2022), and Mele 2020), all indicated a positive relationship between students

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engagement and their academic achievement as well as their overall well-being. The numerous importance and impact of school engagement in the overall well-being and academic achievements of students, highlight the need to pay attention in the education of senior secondary school students

Senior secondary school students are learners usually within the age range of 16 and 18 who

are in their final years of secondary education. According to Bridges (2017), a secondary school student is regarded as an individual enrolled in educational institutions offering secondary education programmes either scientific, humanistic or technical subjects to equip them for university education or labour market. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014), as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE), senior secondary education is a post basic education children receive after a successful completion of Basic Education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate Examinations (JAISCE). In the views of Okeke *et al* (2024), secondary education is an important tier in the hierarchy of Nigerian Educational System and the form of education students receive after their primary education. Operationally, secondary education is a form of education students receive in an educational institution that succeeds primary education and precedes tertiary education. It focuses on equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values required for active participation in the society.

In today's Nigerian secondary school educational system, students seem to have poor or low level of affective engagement. Researchers like (Lara *et al* 2021; DeToro *et al* 2023; and Saracostti *et al* 2019) have pointed out some of the factors that could have led to poor or low affective engagement among senior secondary school students to include, lack of peer support, lack of family support, lack of teacher support, unchallenging curriculum contents, unconducive learning environment, lack of meaningful feedback, inadequate infrastructural facilities, limited opportunities to participate in school activities and inability to resolve conflicts among them. The researchers also added that such personal factors like learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and external stressors all affects students engagement in the school. To emphasize more on teacher factor, when there is no cordial relationship between the teacher and the students or between the learner and the students or between the learners and his classmates, there could be existence of lack of trust that could give rise to conflict and low school engagement among senior secondary school students especially in Abia State.

Over the years, the researchers' observed that a greater percentage of senior secondary school students in Abia State avoid classes and other school programmes and activities. Instead of actively involving themselves in the curriculum and extracurricular activities of the school to achieve all round development, one could see them roaming around the school premises, hanging under the trees, hiding inside the bushes, clinging to their mobile phones and using it to commit all sort of internet frauds and cybercrimes. Most of the students use their cell phones to engage in sport betting, whatsapping and facebooking, while some watch nudes during school hours instead

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of participating in the school programmes. Most students have negative attitude towards schooling, they hardly attend classes, do their assignments, and write tests or examinations. Many of them believe that education is a scam. Due to peer pressure, most of them became addicted to the internet watching all these popular celebrities and online influencers instead of engaging in their school programmes. Most students go extra mile to see them as their role models without

knowing the true source of their wealth and popularities. The issues of materialism and get rich quick syndrome are really pushing students away from engaging in school programmes, most of them have poor orientation about academic achievement and do not know the direct and indirect effect this poor or low level of school engagement may have on their academic achievement.

For instance, in 2020 as noted by Eke (2023), Abia State recorded a 73.4% pass rate in JAMB examination with 43,857 candidates sitting for the exam. According to the author, Abia obtained a 91.4% pass rate in NECO SSCE surpassing the national average of 73.2%, in 2019 the State recorded 89.3% and 88.2% pass rates in NECO exams. Also in 2020 WAEC SSCE, Abia recorded, 75.2% pass rate in the core subject of English and Mathematics and at least three other subjects. Significantly the above performance is higher than the national average of 59.2%. Eke (2023), further explained that Abia State has produced some of the best students in Nigeria with most of the students from the State scoring all A's in WAEC and SSCE. For instance, in 2020, a student from Abia State emerged among the top performing students in the country having scored A's in all the nine subjects.

Despite Abia State's impressive performance in national examinations as agued by Eke (2023), Abia State students find it challenging to gain admission into tertiary institutions. Eke quoting JAMB argued that out of 43,857 who sat for 2020 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), only 13,434 candidates from the State gained admission into tertiary institutions representing just 30.6% of the total candidates that sat for the exams. Significantly, this is lower than the national average of 40.2%. However authors like Okeoma, Unachukwu and Okeke (2024), attributed these impressive performances of students in external examinations especially in WAEC and NECO to the effect of miracle or special centres that allowed the students to engage in all sorts of examination malpractices after collecting huge amounts of money from them to settle the invigilators and exam monitors so that they could be allowed to cheat in the examination hall and pass very well. To curb examination malpractice and align Nigeria's education assessment with international digital standards, the Minister of Education Dr. Tunji Alausa declared that by May/June 2026, both WAEC and NECO examinations including essay, theory and objectives papers would be conducted on computer platforms (Ozibo, 2025). This transition to computer based is triggering a high level of anxiety and fear among senior secondary school students in Abia State especially the students who have made up their minds to engage in examination malpractice instead of actively engaging in the school's academic and non-academic activities for a higher academic achievement and all round development.

Considering the extent of low affective school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State, several efforts have been made by the government, teachers and other

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stake-holders in education to encourage high level of school engagement among students. For instance, Dr. Alex Chioma Otti, the current Governor of Abia State has taken several steps to improve school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State, including lunching of the Abia Fostering Innovation and Reform for School Transformation (FIRST) Education Programme, investing in infrastructure, training and recruitment of teachers. Also, he

has hinted off discriminatory salary in favour of teachers in Abia State. The Governor explained that the incentive was to attract teachers to the school system and motivate them to engage the students.

Okeoma, Unachukwu and Okeke (2024), argued that in spite of all the teachers and governments effort to actively engage the students in the teaching and learning process for maximal success, most secondary school students lack the required affective engagement in their school programmes. As maintained by Mbanuzuru *et al* (2021), the evidence of low school engagement among senior secondary school students could be revealed in the students' poor study habit, inclination to cell phones, internet addiction, and lateness to school. However, this is directly or indirectly affecting the students' academic achievements. Consequently, Okeoma, Unachukwu and Okeke (2024), suggested that attention should be given to factors that could redirect senior secondary school students toward affective engagement in school programmes. However, some of the factors could be effective communication and emotional intelligence.

Effective communication is the process of exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge so that the message is clearly communicated by the sender and adequately received and understood by the receiver. According to Spencer-Oatey (2020), effective communication strategies are essential for academic adjustment enabling students to build a positive relationship with peers, teachers, navigate academic demands and seek support when needed. Haiilo (2025), was of the view that every effective communication plan should clearly include three important factors that directly impact the success of the strategy. These factors include; the audience, the message, and the channel through which communication is sent to the receiver. In the view of Jacob (2023), communication strategies are divided into three categories: non-verbal, verbal and visual. Verbal communication can be done through oral or written. Non-verbal communication strategy consists of non-verbal cues like facial expressions, voice tone or body language. Visual communication on its own uses pictorial interpretation or web pages to communicate. Coursera Staff (2025), added that communication can occur in person, on internet (on forums, social media and websites), over the phone (through apps, calls, and video), or by mail. Some of the benefits of effective communication in an individual's personal life as identified by Coursera Staff (2025) include; improved social, emotional and mental health deeper connection with people, new bonds based on trust and transparency, better problem solving and conflict resolution skills. The seven C's of effective communication as identified by Mindtools Content Team (2025) are; clear, concise, concrete, correct, coherent, complete, and courteous. In the context of this study, effective communication strategy is the ability of students to communicate clearly, listen actively

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and empathize with others. Research conducted by Komarraju and Karau (2015) indicated that effective communication played a significant role in promoting school engagement. According to the researchers, such effective communication strategies include; active listening and clear expression which also enabled students to build a positive relationships with peers and teachers. Also, Hativa (2013), found that students who possess effective communication skills have conflict

resolution skills for a better school engagement. Shan *et al* (2018), reported that when teachers create a sense of community, respond to students and foster positive relationships, students are more engaged and enthusiastic about learning and tend to perform better academically. In this study, another factor that was considered to have the potential of repositioning senior secondary school students towards affective school engagement is emotional intelligence.

In the notions of Gkintoni *et al* (2025), emotional intelligence is an individual's capacity to effectively comprehend, regulate and harness emotions in both one of others in a constructive manner for the benefit of self and others. It thus helps to foster a loving, supporting and productive educational environment that could facilitate school engagement among the students Goleman (1995), who popularized the Salovey and Mayer's theory of emotional intelligence identified five major components of emotional intelligence as; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. However, this study focused on determining the extent empathy in emotional intelligence could predict conflict resolution and affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State.

As described by Iwuchukwu (2025), empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Iwuchukwu further argued that it goes beyond sympathy which is just acknowledging another person's feelings. According to Drigas and Papousti (2018), empathy is the ability to recognize another person's State of emotion and why they are in such emotional State. In a similar vein, Cherry (2023), saw empathy as the tendency to recognize the feelings of others and view things from their own perspective. Block Leadership (2022), simply referred to empathy as "I sense your pain" Accordingly, students who are emotionally intelligent walk in another person's shoes to know what the person is going through so as to understand the person better. A person who is emotionally intelligent can easily distinguish between genuine and fake emotions. Empathy helps the students to be sympathetic to other persons needs and feelings genuinely. A student who lacks this skill does not really understand how other people are feeling, they may not also understand how their emotional responses could affect others. As a result, they could be in constant conflict with their peers and teachers in the school. Empathy as cited in Anuri (2025), involves two components; cognitive empathy which focused on cognitively perspective taking and affective empathy which focused on emotional sharing. Affective empathy could lead to affective school engagement among senior secondary school students.

In the context of this study, empathy is the ability of the students to understand other students from their internal frame of reference which is usually reflected in the way they understand and share their emotions in the exact way it affect them. Empathy is important in education in the

sense that it helps the students to manage academic stress and engage actively in the school programmes. Furthermore; Garandea *et al* (2021) observed that empathy plays an important role in promoting positive mental health and emotional well-being among students. When students feel valued and understood by their peers, it reduces feelings of isolation and enhances their sense of belonging. This invariably improves affective school engagement among secondary school

students. Previous researchers have found out that empathy reduces negative behaviours, improves students' engagements, academic achievement and their overall well-being (see Burton, 2023; Iwuchukwu, 2025; Amiri, 2025; Bernil, 2024). Also; Jenaabadi (2025), observed that empathy training affected the student's resilience, self-efficacy and school engagement. As a result, there is the need to help students build their skill of empathy. Cherry (2023), outlined the following ways to help students to build their empathy; being willing to share their feelings among their peers, engaging in school programmes, listening to others, talking to new people, practicing loving kindness meditation, trying to envisage himself in someone else's shoes. Consequently, by practicing all these ways, students do not only build their empathy skill, hence they would also build their communication or social skills that would help them towards resolving a conflict.

Effective communication and empathy in emotional intelligence are important in the student's affective school engagement as could be observed in the background literature. However, despite the importance within the researchers' knowledge, there is no study on Effective communication and empathy in emotional intelligence as predictors of conflict resolution and affective school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia. Consequently, it is against this background that the researcher intends to investigate effective communication and empathy in emotional intelligence as predictors of affective school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal school setting, senior secondary school students in Abia State should exhibit a positive attitude towards school engagement characterized by active participation in academic and non-academic activities like attending to classes, concentrating in class, doing their class and home works, participating in school sports and guidance programmes, exhibit a positive attitude towards schooling, show strong motivation to learn and a sense of belonging to their school community. Students are supposed to possess conflict resolution skills such as effective communication. They are also expected to have developed empathy in emotional intelligence to enable them to get along with everyone and to affectively engage in the school programmes.

However, the current situation in most secondary schools in Abia State is worrisome. Many students exhibit low level of affective engagement marked by lateness to school, poor class attendance, poor academic performance, lack of motivation, disconnection from school activities, negative attitude towards schooling, learning, test, examination and learning experiences. Instead of active participation in school programmes to achieve all round development and high academic

achievement, one could see them engaging in non-school related and unhealthy activities such as risky sexual behaviours, cybercrime, internet fraud, sports betting, stealing, drug abuse, internet addiction and among others which could impact their academic achievement. Due to fear of failure, one could see them engaging in all sorts of examination misconducts and malpractices such as cheating, copying and use of phone in the exam hall just to pass their examinations.

However, some of the factors that could have led to students poor school engagement may include; poor facilitates, negative attitude of the teachers, poor teaching strategies, unchallenging curriculum contents and lack of enriched environment. Again, most students lack effective communication and empathy skills which results to constant conflict and low level of affective engagement in the school. All these may subsequently lead to poor academic achievement and even school drop-out among senior secondary school students in Abia State.

However, the gap between the ideal situation and the current realities among senior secondary school students in Abia State highlights the need to investigate Effective communication and empathy in emotional intelligence as predictors of conflict resolution and affective school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia Notwithstanding the importance of the study, within the researcher's knowledge, there is a scarcity of research in this area especially within the context of senior secondary school students in Abia State. The gap in research thus highlights the need to investigate effective communication and empathy in emotional intelligence as predictors of conflict resolution and affective school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State.

Purpose of the study

- The purpose of the study was to investigate effective communication and empathy as predictors of conflict resolution and affective school engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia. Specifically, the study sought to;
- Examine the extent effective communication predict affective engagement among students.
- Investigate the extent empathy in emotional intelligence predict affective engagement among students.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What is the extent effective communication predict affective engagement among students?
2. To what extent does empathy in emotional intelligence predict affective engagement among students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- ♦ Effective communication does not significantly predict affective engagement among students.

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- ♦ There is no significance prediction between empathy in emotional intelligence and affective engagement among students.

Methodology

Correlational research design was utilized for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), the

main focus of correlational research design is on establishing the relationship between two or more variables. The population of the study consisted of all Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in the Government Secondary Schools in all the three education zones of Abia State. The Available statistics indicated that there are a total number of 29077 (13,168 males and 15,891 females) SS2 students in Abia State (Planning Research Statistics Department, Secondary Education Management Board Headquarters Umuahia, Abia State 2025). Multi-stage sampling techniques were adopted to select the sample size of 400 SS2 students in Abia State. The researcher developed three research instruments for data collection. The instruments were titled: Effective Communication Questionnaire (ECQ), Empathy in Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EEIQ) and Affective Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) The three instruments consisted of ten (10) questionnaire items, structured on a four point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points, High Extent (HE) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point respectively. The instruments were face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Guidance and Counselling (Educational Psychology Unit) and one from Science Education Department (Measurement and Evaluation Unit) respectively all from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The internal consistency reliability of the three instruments were determined using Cronbach Alpha Method. The instruments had reliability coefficients of 0.80 for the ECQ, 0.84 for the EEIQ and 0.75 for SEQ respectively. The instruments were administered to the students using direct delivery and recovery approach through the help of three (3) research assistants. All the copies of the questionnaires were returned. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to answer the research questions, while linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results from the data analyzed were presented in line with research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question 1

What is the extent effective communication predict affective engagement among students?

Table 1: *Correlation Matrix of effective communication as a predictor of affective engagement senior secondary school students*

Source		EC.	AESSS
EC.	Pearson Correlation	1	-.943*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

AESSS	N	400	400
	Pearson Correlation	-.943*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	210
	R ²	.880	

EC = Effective Communication, AESSS = Affective Engagement of Secondary School Students Adjustment of In-school Adolescents.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Data in Table 1 indicate a correlation coefficient (r) of -.943 which is negative and within the coefficient limit of ± 0.81 -1.00. This reveals that effective communication predicts affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State to a very high negative extent. The coefficient of determination (R²) .880 indicates that 88.0% of the variance observed in the affective engagement of students was accounted for by effective communication. Therefore, effective communication negatively predicted 88.0% of the variance observed in the affective engagement of senior secondary school students in in Abia State.

Hypothesis 1: Effective communication does not significantly predict affective engagement among students.

Table 2: *Linear Regression Analysis of Effective Communication and Affective Engagement among Students.*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	218.322	1	218.322	110.319	.000
Residual	1185.178	599	1.979		
Total	1403.500	400			

Data in Table 2 showed that effective communication significantly predicted affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State. The calculated f-value of 110.319 in respect of the relationship between effective communication and affective engagement among senior secondary school students is higher than f-critical of 1.96 with degree of freedom of

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1 and 599 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that States effective communication does not significantly predict affective engagement among students. Consequently, effective communication significantly predicted affective engagement among students.

Research question 2: To what extent does empathy in emotional intelligence predict affective engagement among students?

Table 3: *Correlation Matrix of Empathy in Emotional Intelligence and Affective Engagement among Students.*

Source		EEI.	AESSS
EEI.	Pearson Correlation	1	-.724*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
AESSS	Pearson Correlation	-.724*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	210
	R ²	.522	

EEI. = Empathy in Emotional Intelligence, AESSS = Affective Engagement among Secondary School Students

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Data in Table 3 indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of -.72 which is negative and within the coefficient limit of ± 0.61 - 0.80. This indicated that empathy in emotional intelligence predicted affective engagement among senior secondary school students to a negatively high extent. The coefficient of determination (R^2) .522 indicated that 52.2% of the variance observed in affective engagement was accounted for by empathy in emotional intelligence. Consequently, empathy in emotional intelligence negatively predicted 52.2% of the affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significance prediction between empathy in emotional intelligence and affective engagement among students.

Table 4: *Linear Regression Analysis of Empathy in Emotional Intelligence and Affective Engagement among Students.*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	257.612	1	257.612	52.822	.000
Residual	2916.153	598	4.877		
Total	3173.765	400			

Df= degree of freedom, F = F-calculated, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

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The data in Table 4 showed that empathy in emotional intelligence significantly predicted affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State. The calculated f-value of 52.822 in respect of the relationship between empathy in emotional intelligence and affective engagement among snior secondary school students is higher than f-critical value of 1.96 with degree of freedom of 1 and 598 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which State that there is no significance prediction between empathy in emotional intelligence and

affective engagement among students was rejected. Consequently, empathy in emotional intelligence significantly and negatively predicted affective engagement among students.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that effective communication significantly predicted affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State as it negatively predicted 88.0% of the variance observed in the academic adjustment of in-school adolescents' in Abia State. This is in agreement with the findings of earlier researchers. For instance, research conducted by Komarraju and Karau (2015) indicated that effective communication played a significant role in promoting school engagement. According to the researchers, such effective communication strategies include; active listening and clear expression which also enabled students to build a positive relationships with peers and teachers. Also, Hativa (2013), found that students who possess effective communication skills have conflict resolution skills for a better school engagement. Shan *et al* (2018), reported that when teachers create a sense of community, respond to students and foster positive relationships, students are more engaged and enthusiastic about learning and tend to perform better academically.

Furthermore, the findings of this research indicated that empathy in emotional intelligence negatively predicted 52.2% of the affective engagement of senior secondary school students in Abia State as it significantly predicted the affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State. This finding is in agreement with the findings of previous researchers who reported that empathy reduces negative behaviours, improves students' engagements, academic achievement and their overall well-being (see Amiri, 2025; Bernil, 2024; Burton, 2023; Iwuchukwu, 2025;). Also; Jenaabadi 2025 observed that empathy training affected the student's resilience, self-efficacy and affective school engagement. As a result, there is the need to help students build their skill of empathy. Cherry (2023), outlined the following ways to help students to build their empathy; being willing to share their feelings among their peers, engaging in school programmes, listening to others, talking to new people, practicing loving kindness meditation, trying to envisage himself in someone else's shoes. Consequently, by practicing all these ways, students do not only build their empathy skill, hence they would also build their communication or social skills that would help them towards resolving a conflict and at the same time develop a positive attitude towards school engagement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that effective communication significantly predicted affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State as it negatively predicted 88.0% of the variance observed in the affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State. Empathy in emotional intelligence negatively predicted 52.2% of the affective engagement of senior secondary school students in

Abia State as it significantly predicted the affective engagement among senior secondary school students in Abia State.

Educational Implications

When educational institutions adopt a student centred approach, it would provide opportunities for students to express themselves, share their thoughts, and engage in discussions. This could help build confidence, promote effective communication and increase affective engagement among the senior secondary school students.

It is essential to incorporate empathy building activities into school curriculum to foster a supportive learning environment.

Recommendations

Teachers should establish feedback mechanisms that allow students to express their thoughts and feelings. Helping teachers to identify areas of improvements and at the same time tailor their teaching approaches to meet the student's communication needs.

Government should create an inclusive learning environment that promotes understanding, diversity and encourages free expression among the students.

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