# Emotional Intelligence and Gender Difference in Truancy Disposition among In-School Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Truancy has always been a major challenge to the success of the educational system, a problem that has been especially titanic for most southwestern states in Nigeria, especially Oyo State as high levels of truancy have been responsible for high social vices and crime rates among the adolescents and youths. The current study attempts to investigate the role of emotional intelligence and gender in the truancy of in-school adolescents in Ibadan. The research adopted an ex-post facto research design that used a multi-stage sampling technique to select 1,215 in-school adolescents from 6 local governments in Ibadan comprising of 638 (52.51%) males and 577 (47.49%) females, with ages between 14 and 19 years. A self-administered structured questionnaire that contained validated scales measuring truancy with the 24-item school refusal assessment scale by Kearney (2002), emotional intelligence with trait emotional intelligence scale–adolescent short form (TEIQue-Asf) by Petrides, Chamorro-Permuzic, Furnham, and Frederickson (2005), and gender was used for data collection. Three hypotheses were stated and tested at a .05 level of significance. Emotional intelligence dimensions significantly predicted truancy among secondary school students and accounted for 4.1% of the observed variance ($R^2$= .041, $F_{(4,1210)}$= 12.924, p<.01); only the independent contribution of wellbeing ($\beta$ = -.168, t= -5.887, p<.01) and self-control ($\beta$ = -.106, t= -3.762, p<.01) dimensions of emotional intelligence were significant. Male students ($\overline{X}$ =59.50, SD=23.66) were significantly higher on truancy than female students ($\overline{X}$ =55.77, SD=21.51) (t(1212) = 2.868, p<.01). Gender significantly moderated the relationship of wellbeing emotional intelligence with truancy ($R^2\Delta$ = .005; $F\Delta_{(1,1210)}$ = 6.770, p$\Delta$ <.01) and emotionality emotional intelligence with truancy ($R^2\Delta$ = .006; $F\Delta_{(1,1210)}$ = 7.465, p$\Delta$ <.01) but did not significantly moderate the relationship of self-control emotional intelligence with truancy ($R^2\Delta$ = .001; $F\Delta_{(1,1210)}$ = 11.780, p$\Delta$ >.05) and sociability emotional intelligence with truancy ($R^2\Delta$ = .000; $F\Delta_{(1,1210)}$ = .432, p$\Delta$ >.05).It was concluded that adolescents that possess high rates of emotional intelligence and females are at a lower risk of truancy. It was recommended that interventions on truancy be focused on male adolescents especially those with lower trait emotional intelligence.

**Keywords:** Truancy, Trait Emotional Intelligence, Gender, Adolescents

## Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by significant physical, emotional, and social changes. During this period, adolescents often seek autonomy, identity, and peer acceptance, which can sometimes lead to behaviours that deviate from societal norms. One such behaviour is truancy, which refers to the intentional, unjustified absence from school. Truancy is not just a problem for the individual student; it has far-reaching consequences that affect

families, schools, and the broader society. **Truancy** is the act of intentionally or habitually staying away from school without valid or legitimate reasons. It is characterized by repeated and unauthorized absences from school, often without the knowledge or permission of parents or guardians (Kethineni, et al., 2021). In Great Britain, the term "school refusal" has been used to describe similar challenges among children who avoid school due to emotional disturbances. Truancy's short-term consequences include lower academic performance, family crises, an increased risk of dropping out of school, and problems with peer relationships, while long-term effects may include academic underachievement and difficulties in securing employment (Santos, et al., 2023; Mulcahy, 2020).

In Nigeria, truancy has caused significant setbacks for children, adolescents, and youth in their educational pursuits. This behaviour poses a serious threat to the academic achievement and overall development of students (Hassan, et al., 2024; Unimna, et al., 2024). Truancy has become a pressing issue in today's society, serving as a gateway to criminal activities among adolescents (Yankyerah, et al., 2023). Crime statistics reveal that approximately 80% of young people involved in criminal activities are either school dropouts or students who abandon their school routines to engage in illegal behaviours (Paraman & Hussain, 2022). This trend has contributed to the rise of delinquent behaviour, with truants often becoming involved in activities such as drug abuse, alcoholism, armed robbery, and other anti-social behaviours (Ndu, et al., 2024). These activities not only tarnish the image of society but also jeopardize the future aspirations, dreams, and efforts of the students involved. The pervasive impact of truancy has made it a societal issue that demands urgent attention (Adomeh, et al., 2020; Stephens-Dunn, 2022).

Adolescents who engage in truancy often partake in illegal activities during school hours, including drug abuse, gambling, robbery, immoral behaviour, smoking, and other anti-social activities (Adeniyi & Jinadu, 2021). These behaviours have significant implications for both society and the lives of the truant adolescents themselves. Importantly, research by Weathers, et al., (2021) and Mireles-Rios, et al., (2020) has shown that a significant proportion of criminals (around 70%) had a history of truancy during their school years. This revealed the need for urgent intervention to address the root causes of truancy and prevent its long-term negative effects on individuals and society. One key factor in understanding and addressing truancy is emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence is crucial in shaping adolescents' behaviour, including their engagement with school and their ability to navigate social and academic pressures. According to Mayer et al. (2017), EI encompasses a range of emotional, personal, and social abilities that influence how individuals cope with environmental demands.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. It encompasses a range of skills, including emotional awareness, empathy, self-regulation, and social skills (Williams-Ilemobola, et al., 2021). Adolescents with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle the challenges of school

life, navigate peer relationships, and manage stress, all of which contribute to regular school attendance and academic success (Chamizo-Nieto, et al., 2021; Fiorilli, et al., 2020).Research has shown that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of academic performance and student behaviour (Mbaegbu, et al., 2023; Okwuduba et al., 2021). Students who possess strong emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit positive behaviours, such as attending classes regularly, participating in school activities, and maintaining healthy relationships with peers and teachers. These students are also more resilient in the face of challenges, enabling them to cope with the pressures of school without resorting to truancy.

Conversely, adolescents with low emotional intelligence may struggle to manage their emotions, leading to difficulties in school (Adewale, et al., 2024). They may find it challenging to deal with the stress of academic work, conflicts with peers, or personal issues at home. These emotional struggles can manifest in various ways, including disengagement from school, poor academic performance, and ultimately, truancy. The inability to regulate emotions and respond to social cues effectively can also lead to feelings of alienation and frustration, further increasing the likelihood of absenteeism.

Gender differences in truancy behaviour have been a subject of significant research, as they can offer insights into the underlying factors that influence absenteeism among male and female students. Studies indicate that male students are more likely to engage in truancy than their female counterparts (Aqeel&Rehna, 2020).

This trend has been attributed to various factors, including differences in socialisation, peer influence, and engagement with school activities. Boys are often socialized to exhibit independence and risk-taking behaviours, which can manifest in higher rates of truancy. Additionally, peer influence tends to be stronger among males, with boys more likely to skip school as part of group behaviour or to gain social acceptance (Heyder, et al., 2021). In contrast, female students typically exhibit lower rates of truancy, but when they do engage in such behaviour, it is often linked to emotional or relational issues. Girls are more likely to be absent from school due to family responsibilities, such as caregiving, or due to relational problems, such as bullying or conflict with peers (Connelly & O'Connell, 2022). Moreover, female truancy is frequently associated with internalizing behaviours, including anxiety and depression, which may lead to avoidance of school settings where these feelings are exacerbated (Olivier, et al., 2020).

Given the high prevalence of truancy among secondary school students, as frequently reported in the news media, this study is of significant importance. The research focuses on public secondary schools in Nigeria, a developing nation where additional data on adolescent truancy is needed. The factors predicting truancy behaviour have not been thoroughly explored within Nigerian contexts, particularly among secondary school students. The cost and impact of severe truancy are profound, with significant implications for the youths involved. Truancy not only affects the individual but also has long-term repercussions for families, schools, and the

wider community.

Previous research on truancy has largely focused on socioeconomic factors, family background, peer influence, and school environment as primary predictors (Ampofo, et al., 2022; Felix, & Kayode, 2023). Studies have shown that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more prone to truancy due to factors such as lack of parental supervision, financial challenges, and the need to engage in income-generating activities (Lematango, 2021). In terms of family influence, harsh parenting styles, domestic conflicts, and lack of parental involvement in a child's education have been linked to higher rates of truancy (Wokoma & Udochukwu, 2020; Aruoture & Adegoke, 2024). However, limited attention has been given to the role of emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions and those of others. While some studies have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance, or between gender and school behaviour, there is a need for research to examine the independent and joint influence of emotional intelligence and gender on truancy behaviours in Nigerian adolescents, and also the moderating role of gender in the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and its components and Truancy. To fill this research gap, this study will examine the independent and joint influence of emotional intelligence and gender differences in truancy disposition among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria.

To this end, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

i. Will the emotional intelligence of in-school adolescents predict their level of truancy∆

ii. Are there gender differences in truancy among in-school adolescents∆

iii. Will gender moderate the influence of emotional intelligence on the truancy of in-school adolescents∆

## Method

### Design
This study is a cross-sectional survey and the ex-post facto design was used for the study to only measure the relationship between the independent variables, emotional intelligence and gender and the dependent variable, truancy.

### Setting
The setting of the research was the public senior schools located within these less-city areas of Ibadan the capital of Oyo State in Nigeria; the areas include Ona-Ara, Lagelu, Egbeda, Oluyole, Akinyele and Iddo. The choice of this research setting was due to the fact that the state government has embarked on various programmes in clearing the state capital (Ibadan) of truants, which have not yielded much positive results. Yet little or none has been done in the suburbs of the town. Statistics from the state Ministry of Education also indicate that about 15% of pupils registered in school within these less city areas are marked absent per week. The searchlight of the government has not been focused on fewer cities and the pupils are still seen loafing about, getting involved in illicit acts which are detrimental to their lives and the society at large, when they ought to be in school.

**Participants**

The focus of this study was the in-school adolescents within the selected populace. These are boys and girls within the ages of 14 – 19 years, in the secondary school system. This SSS 1, 2 and 3 classes were chosen to enhance adequate representation and generalization of the result at the end of the study. A total of one thousand two hundred and fifteen participants (n = 1,215) in-school adolescents was selected for this study, out of which six hundred and thirty-eight (638) were boys and the remaining five hundred and seventy-seven (577) were girls to allow for equal representation. The schools were selected within the six local government areas in Ibadan.

**Inclusion criteria**

a) Secondary schools within less-city areas around Ibadan.

b) Less city areas (rural areas which are with the absence of good infrastructure, such as good motor-able roads, pipe borne water, electricity and low social economic status of residents).

c) Local government areas: Akinyele, Iddo, Oluyole, Egebda, Lagelu and Onaara local government areas.

d) Senior secondary school adolescents between the age bracket of 14 and 19 years old.

**Exclusion criteria**

a) Secondary Schools in Urban Areas

b) Adolescents Outside the Age Bracket and the Local government mentioned above

c) Adolescent in Junior Secondary School

**Sampling**

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted because different sampling techniques were used at various stages of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Akinyele, Egbeda, Iddo, Lagelu, Ona-Ara and Oluyole local government areas. This was done with the use of the 2006 population census data in identifying less city areas (underdeveloped communities) as the less-city areas. Purposive sampling technique was used to pick six (6) secondary schools in each local government areas which are located within and around Ibadan municipal. Convenience sampling was used to select participants among senior secondary school students in the schools.

**Instruments**

A structured self-administered questionnaire was administered to the students. It consists of a measure of gender, emotional intelligence and truancy.

**Emotional Intelligence:** Trait Emotional Intelligence Scale – adolescent short form (TEIQue-Asf) developed by Petrides, Chamorro-Permuzic, Furnham, and Frederickson (2005) was adapted. The scale is a simplified version in terms of wording and syntactic complexity of the adult short form of the TEIQue; it comprises 30 short statements (items). The internal consistency reliability of the scale is above .80 and is said never to be below .70 in any study. The scale has been said to be used successfully with

children as young as eleven (11) years old (Petrides et al., 2005). The scale is of a 7-point response format, ranging from Disagree (1) – Agree (7). 26 of the 30 items are assigned to one of the following four subscales: Emotionality (eight items); Sociability (six items); Self-control (six items); Well-being (six items). The four remaining items contribute to only the cumulative TEI score. The higher the score of the respondent indicates agreement with the item and vice-versa. The coefficient alpha the scale in this present study was reported at .87.

**Truancy:** This was measured by school refusal assessment scale-revised and developed by Kearney (2002).The scale is a 7 point format scale ranging from "never to always = 6" for positive statement and vice versa. Previous research with the scale has demonstrated adequate psychometric, part of which is one to two weeks test-retest reliability of 0.68. Inter-item reliability coefficient ranged from 0.56 to 0.78 (Kearney, 2002) in their study of school refusal behaviour in ecological context. In this study the scale coefficient reliability was reported at .77. Idowu, Durosaro and Esere (2004) reported an internal consistency (coefficient alpha) of 0.77 for the scale in their study "Efficacy of group counselling interference (positive reinforcement and self-control technique) in remedying truancy among school going adolescents in Ilorin, Nigeria".

**Procedure**
In conducting this study, research assistants were employed for the distribution of the questionnaires. The secondary schools selected; Community High School Ejioku and OtunAgbakin, Idi Iya and Aba Alfa Community High School, EleshinFunfun Community High School and Community High School Eleshinshonsho assembled the students in the senior classes in the school halls where two hundred and thirty-five (235) were randomly selected in each of the schools and the scales were administered to them. The researcher and the researcher assistants were on ground to guide the participants in filling the scales appropriately. In some of the schools, school assembly halls were used and in some other schools the scales were administered to participants in their classrooms, after which the data collected through the scales were analyzed appropriately.

**Statistical Analysis**
Using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software 21.0 version, data collected in the study were analyzed. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis of the data collected. Specifically, Pearson product moment correlation, multiple regression analysis, t-test for independent samples and hierarchical multiple regression were used for hypotheses testing at .05 level of significance.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix Showing Relationship between the Dependent Variable and Independent Variables of the Study**

| S/N | Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Truancy | - | | | | | | |
| 2 | Emotional Intelligence (EI) | -.146** | - | | | | | |
| 3 | Wellbeing EI | -.170** | .662** | - | | | | |
| 4 | Self-Control EI | -.111** | .406** | .017 | - | | | |
| 5 | Emotionality EI | -.032 | .492* | .163** | .051 | - | | |
| 6 | Sociability EI | -.033 | .488* | .023 | .091** | .057* | - | |
| 7 | Gender | -.082* | .084* | .085** | .002 | .083** | .021 | - |

Result from table 4.1 reveals that truancy has a significant inverse relationship with emotional intelligence - EI (r=-.146, p<.01). This infers that rate of student truancy decreases with increase in students' emotional intelligence.

A further look at the dimensions of emotional intelligence reveals that truancy is significantly inversely correlated with wellbeing (r=-.170, p<.01) and self-control (r=-.111, p<.01) dimensions of emotional intelligence. This infers that truancy decreases when students wellbeing and self-control aspects of emotional intelligence increases. However, there was no significant relationship of truancy with both the emotionality (r=-.032, p>.05) and sociability (r=-.033, p>.05) dimensions of Emotional intelligence.

Also, truancy showed a significant inverse relationship with gender (r=-.082, p<.05). Since gender is a dummy variable in this study, such that the females were accorded a higher score than males, this would infer that truancy tends significantly towards the male gender than it does towards the female gender.

**Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression showing influence of Emotional Intelligence dimensions on Truancy**

| | Variables | | t | P | R | $R^2$ | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Truancy | Wellbeing EI | -.168 | -5.887 | <.01 | .202 | .041 | 12.924 | <.01 |
| | Self-Control EI | -.106 | -3.762 | <.01 | | | | |
| | Emotionality EI | .002 | .053 | >.05 | | | | |
| | Sociability EI | -.019 | -.680 | >.05 | | | | |

Results from table 2 revealed that emotional intelligence dimensions significantly predicted truancy among secondary school students ($R^2$= .041, F(4,1210)= 12.924, p<.01). This infers that emotional intelligence accounts for only 4.1 % of variance observed in the truancy of secondary school students. It was further revealed that only the independent contribution of wellbeing (β = -.168, t= -5.887, p<.01) and self-control (β = -.106, t= -3.762, p<.01) dimensions of emotional intelligence were significant in the model.

**Table 3: t-test Showing Gender differences in Truancy**

| | Gender | N | $\bar{X}$ | SD | df | t | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | 638 | 59.50 | 23.66 | | | |
| Truancy | | | | | 1212 | 2.868 | <.01 |
| | Female | 576 | 55.77 | 21.51 | | | |

***Results from table 3 reveals that*** there is a significant difference in the truancy of male and female students (t(1212) = 2.868, p<.01), such that males ($\bar{X}$ =59.50, SD=23.66) present to be higher on truancy than females ($\bar{X}$ =55.77, SD=21.51).

**Table 4: Summary of Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship between Wellbeing Emotional Intelligence and Truancy.**

| Predictors | Model 1 Step1 | | | Model2 Step 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** |
| Wellbeing EI | -.165 | -5.802 | <.01 | -.073 | -1.615 | >.05 |
| Gender | -.068 | -2.401 | <.05 | .041 | .815 | >.05 |
| Wellbeing EI*Gender | | | | -.166 | -2.602 | <.01 |
| R | | .183 | | | .197 | |
| **R²** | | .034 | | | .039 | |
| ΔR² | | .034 | | | .005 | |
| F | | 21.055** | | | 16.360** | |
| ΔF | | 21.055** | | | 6.770** | |

Results in Table 4 revealed that in the first step of the regression analysis (model 1), wellbeing dimension of emotional intelligence and gender jointly accounted for 3.4% variance in truancy [$R^2$ = .034, F(2, 1211) = 21.055, P<.01]. Both the independent contribution of wellbeing emotional intelligence and gender were significant [(β= -.165, t=-5.802; *p*<.01) and (β= -.068, t=-2.401; *p* < .05) respectively].

***Model 2 is a test of moderation; w***hen the interaction term was introduced results from model 2 revealed ***that gender significantly moderated the relationship between*** wellbeing emotional intelligence and truancy *(*$R^2$Δ = .005; ***F*Δ *(1,1210) = 6.770, p*Δ *< 01*).

In order to determine the direction of the interaction, a table containing conditional effects of wellbeing emotional intelligence on truancy at two levels of gender using the mean scores of the interaction was presented on table 5.

**Table 5: Descriptive table showing the mean scores on Truancy based on interaction between combat exposure and coping self-efficacy.**

| Wellbeing Emotional Intelligence | Gender | Mean |
|---|---|---|
| Low | Male | 63.0620 |
| | Female | 59.5954 |
| High | Male | 54.0120 |
| | Female | 51.4853 |

As shown in Table 5, truancy tends to be highest when wellbeing emotional intelligence is low. However, truancy is higher among males both when wellbeing emotional intelligence is low ($\overline{X}$=63.06) and high ($\overline{X}$=54.12), but lower among females both when wellbeing emotional intelligence is low ($\overline{X}$=59.60) and high ($\overline{X}$=51.49). Hence, the gender of adolescents moderates the influence of wellbeing emotional intelligence on truancy.

**Table 6: Summary of Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship between Self-Control Emotional Intelligence and Truancy.**

| Predictors | Model 1 Step1 | | | Model2 Step 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** |
| Self-Control EI | -.111 | -3.904 | <.01 | -.140 | -3.342 | <.01 |
| Gender | -.082 | -2.876 | <.01 | -.119 | -2.425 | <.05 |
| Self-Control EI*Gender | | | | .054 | .933 | >.05 |
| R | | .138 | | | .141 | |
| **R$^2$** | | .019 | | | .020 | |
| ΔR$^2$ | | .019 | | | .001 | |
| F | | 11.780** | | | 8.142** | |
| ΔF | | 11.780** | | | .870 | |

Results in Table 6 revealed that in the first step of the regression analysis (model 1), self-control dimension of emotional intelligence and gender jointly accounted for 1.9% variance in truancy [$R^2$ = .019, F(2, 1211) = 11.780, P<.01]. Both the independent contribution of self-control emotional intelligence and gender were significant [(β= -.111, t=-3.904; *p*<.01) and (β= -.082, t=-2.876; *p* < .01) respectively].

***Model 2 is a test of moderation; w***hen the interaction term was introduced, results in model 2 revealed ***that gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between*** self-control emotional intelligence and truancy *(*R$^2$Δ = .001; ***FΔ (1,1210) = 11.780, p*Δ*>.05***).

**Table 7: Summary of Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship between Emotionality Emotional Intelligence and Truancy.**

| Predictors | Model 1 Step1 | | | Model2 Step 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** |
| Emotionality EI | -.026 | -.904 | >.05 | -.110 | -2.614 | <.01 |
| Gender | -.080 | -2.783 | <.01 | -.185 | -3.858 | <.01 |
| Emotionality EI*Gender | | | | .160 | 2.732 | <.01 |
| R | | .086 | | | .116 | |
| **$R^2$** | | .007 | | | .013 | |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | .007 | | | .006 | |
| F | | 4.520* | | | 5.518** | |
| $\Delta F$ | | 4.520* | | | 7.465** | |

Results in Table 7 revealed that in the first step of the regression analysis (model 1), emotionality dimension of emotional intelligence and gender jointly accounted for 0.7% variance in truancy [$R^2$= .007, F(2,1211)=4.520, P<.05]. Only the independent contribution of gender was significant (β= -.080, t=-2.783; p<.01).

*Model 2 is a test of moderation; w*hen the interaction term was introduced, results revealed *that gender significantly moderated the relationship between* emotionality emotional intelligence and truancy (*$R^2\Delta$ = .006; F$\Delta$ (1,1210) = 7.465, p$\Delta$ <.01*).

In order to determine the direction of the interaction, a table containing conditional effects of emotionality emotional intelligence on truancy at two levels of gender using the mean scores of the interaction was presented on table 8.

**Table 8: Descriptive table showing the mean scores on Truancy based on interaction between Emotionality Emotional Intelligence and gender.**

| Emotionality Emotional Intelligence | Gender | Mean |
|---|---|---|
| Low | Male | 59.2021 |
| | Female | 54.7685 |
| High | Male | 59.9455 |
| | Female | 56.9358 |

As shown in Table 8, truancy is higher among males both when emotionality emotional intelligence is low ($\overline{X}$ =59.20) and high ($\overline{X}$ =59.95), but lower among females both when wellbeing emotional intelligence is low ($\overline{X}$ =54.77) and high ($\overline{X}_{=56.94}$). Hence, the gender of adolescents moderates the influence of emotionality emotional intelligence on truancy.

**Table 9: Summary of Moderated Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship between Sociability Emotional Intelligence and Truancy.**

| Predictors | Model 1 Step1 | | | Model2 Step 2 | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** | **Beta** | **t** | **Sig** |
| Sociability EI | -.031 | -1.076 | >.05 | -.055 | -1.177 | >.05 |
| Gender | -.081 | -2.844 | <.01 | -.110 | -2.112 | <.05 |
| Sociability EI*Gender | | | | .042 | .657 | >.05 |
| R | | .088 | | | .090 | |
| **$R^2$** | | .008 | | | .008 | |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | .008 | | | .000 | |
| F | | 4.692** | | | 3.270* | |
| $\Delta F$ | | 4.692** | | | .432 | |

Results in Table 9 revealed that in the first step of the regression analysis (model 1), sociability dimension of emotional intelligence and gender jointly accounted for 0.8% variance in truancy [$R^2$ = .008, F(2, 1211) = 4.692, P<.01]. Only the independent contribution of gender was significant (β= -.081, t=-2.844; $p$<.01).

*Model 2 is a test of moderation; w*hen the interaction term was introduced, results in model 2 revealed *that gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between* sociability emotional intelligence and truancy *(*$R^2\Delta$ = .000; *F$\Delta$ (1,1210) = .432, p$\Delta$ >.05*).

**Discussion**

This study set out to identify the role of gender and trait emotional intelligence dimensions in the truancy reported among secondary school students in Ibadan. From the findings of this study, it was made evident that the rate of student truancy decreases with an increase in students' trait emotional intelligence. This underlines the importance of trait emotional intelligence in the tendency of a student to become truant in secondary school. A further look at the dimensions of emotional intelligence revealed that truancy decreases when students' wellbeing and self-control dimensions of trait emotional intelligence increases. However, there was no significant relationship between truancy with both the emotionality and sociability dimensions of trait emotional intelligence.

It was also clearly revealed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted truancy among secondary school students, accounting for 4.1 % of variance observed in the truancy of secondary school students; it was only the independent contribution of wellbeing and self-control dimensions of emotional intelligence that was significant. These results align with that of Oosten, et al., (2023) which showed that adolescents with poor social and emotional skills are more likely to feel withdrawn and excluded, which increases their likelihood of behaving in such anticonventional ways. It could rather be inferred from these findings that possessing the emotional intelligence trait would serve as a buffer for the adolescent from becoming truant. This would leave the truancy tendency among adolescents prominent among those who do not possess the trait of emotional intelligence, which signals them as the vulnerable population that should be given more attention.

It is however worthy of note that wellbeing and self-control dimensions of trait emotional intelligence are more correlated and have a better predictive prowess of adolescent truancy than other dimensions. Since the wellbeing dimension consists of trait happiness, trait optimism and self-esteem, this would infer that happy adolescents, optimistic adolescents and adolescents with good self-esteem and at a lower risk of becoming truant even in the presence of several risk factors. Also, possessing the self-control dimension consisting of emotional regulation, impulsiveness and stress management reduces the tendency of becoming truant in secondary school.

A significant difference in the truancy of male and female students was also revealed, such that males were higher on truancy than females. Also, truancy tends significantly towards the male gender than it does towards the female gender. This is concurrent with the stance of Ogbozor, et al., (2022). However, Omorogiuwa and Yuka, (2022) also affirmed that males at any level of education play truancy more than females. Further, *gender was found to significantly moderate the relationship of* self-control emotional intelligence with truancy and sociability emotional intelligence with truancy. In both moderations, the direction of influence still tended towards the male gender. It connotes that while increase in happiness, optimism and self-esteem (wellbeing dimension) as well as emotional regulation, impulsiveness and stress management seem to predict a reduced rate of adolescent truancy, being female co-joined in reducing such likelihood in secondary school students while being male comorbid an increased vulnerability for males students. This view point is consistent with the conclusions of Gerth, (2022) and Ampofo, et al., (2022) revealed that the relationship between truancy and delinquent behaviour tends to be particularly very obvious most especially among males. Hence, even while possessing a high level of trait emotional intelligence, male adolescents are at an increased risk of becoming truant while female adolescents are at a lower risk of becoming truant.

**Conclusion**

From the foregoing therefore it can be concluded that certain factors predispose in-school pupils to truancy behaviour. Among such are the gender and level of emotional intelligence inherent in the individuals. With high level of emotional intelligence, the truancy level can be reduced drastically among the in-school adolescents. Also, males should be targeted when an intervention strategy at reducing truancy is being contemplated as observed in the present study.

**Recommendations.**

Government and other stakeholders should pursue means of addressing truancy tendency among in-school adolescents and in so doing, the target should be designing of programmes that would enhance the emotional intelligence of these students, and more attention should be directed at males who are more predisposed to truancy behaviour. For the emotional intelligence to be effective (being a major factor in this relationship), it is recommended that, physical environment of the schools should be considered for enhancement as this would contribute to

"ingredients" of emotional development.

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