



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Edu Humanit Lit

ISSN: 2584-2544 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjehl/>

Volume – III Issue – IV (July – August) 2026

Frequency: Bimonthly



TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EARLY LITERACY OUTCOMES AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN ABA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, ABIA STATE.

DR FRANCISCA IFEOMA EHIEMERE

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR NIGERIAN LANGUAGES, ABA

| Received: 28.06.2026 | Accepted: 02.08.2026 | Published: 08.08.2026

*Corresponding author: DR FRANCISCA IFEOMA EHIEMERE

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and early literacy outcomes among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State. The study specifically examined three dimensions of teachers' emotional intelligence self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy and their relationship with three early literacy outcomes, namely letter recognition skills, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills. The study was guided by three research objectives, three research questions, and three null hypotheses. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of preschool teachers and pupils in Aba South Local Government Area. A sample size of 200 respondents was selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Early Literacy Outcomes Questionnaire (TEIELOQ), which was designed on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by experts in Early Childhood Education and Measurement and Evaluation, and its reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that teachers' self-awareness has a significant positive relationship with letter recognition skills among preschool children. It also showed that teachers' self-regulation significantly relates to children's reading readiness, while teachers' empathy significantly influences emergent writing skills. The study concluded that teachers' emotional intelligence plays a vital role in enhancing early literacy outcomes among preschool children. Based on the findings, it was recommended that emotional intelligence training should be integrated into teacher education programmes and regular professional development workshops should be organized for early childhood educators to improve literacy instruction and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, early literacy outcomes, preschool children.

Background of the Study

Early literacy is the foundation upon which subsequent learning and academic achievement are built. It encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that children develop before formal reading and writing instruction. These skills include letter recognition, reading readiness, vocabulary development, phonological awareness, and emergent writing. Early literacy has become a major concern in educational systems worldwide because it significantly influences children's future academic success and contributes to national development through the creation of a literate and productive citizenry. Research has consistently shown that children who acquire strong literacy skills during the preschool years are more likely to experience success in later schooling than those who begin school with literacy deficits.

In Nigeria, the need to strengthen early literacy has gained increasing attention due to concerns about pupils' reading and writing abilities at the primary school level. Early childhood education serves as a critical stage for developing foundational literacy skills that prepare children for formal education. The success of early literacy programmes, however, depends not only on instructional materials and curriculum implementation but also on the psychological and emotional competencies of teachers who interact directly with young learners. Educational psychologists emphasize that teachers' emotional dispositions and interpersonal skills significantly influence children's cognitive, social, and academic development.

One psychological construct that has received considerable attention in recent years is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, manage, and appropriately express emotions while effectively responding to the emotions of others. The concept suggests that emotional competencies are essential for creating positive learning environments and promoting effective teaching and learning. Within preschool settings, emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped to understand children's emotional needs, manage classroom interactions, foster positive relationships, and support learning processes. Studies have demonstrated that social and emotional competencies among educators contribute positively to children's academic and literacy development.

Teachers' emotional intelligence is particularly important during the preschool years because young children rely heavily on emotional support and guidance from adults. Preschool learners are still developing their emotional regulation, communication, and social interaction skills. Consequently, teachers who demonstrate high emotional intelligence can create nurturing environments that encourage exploration, participation, and literacy engagement. Emotional intelligence in this study is conceptualized through self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy.

Self-awareness refers to teachers' ability to recognize and understand their own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and behavioural tendencies. Self-aware teachers are conscious of how their feelings affect classroom interactions and learning experiences. Such teachers can evaluate their emotional responses and ensure that their behaviours promote positive learning environments. In preschool classrooms, self-aware teachers are more likely to demonstrate patience, sensitivity, and consistency while supporting children's literacy activities.

Another important dimension of emotional intelligence is self-regulation, which refers to the ability to manage emotions

effectively and maintain emotional stability during challenging situations. Preschool classrooms often present situations that require patience, flexibility, and emotional control. Teachers with strong self-regulation skills can effectively manage classroom stress, maintain positive interactions with learners, and provide consistent instructional support. Research suggests that emotionally regulated classroom environments promote better learning engagement and support children's academic development.

Empathy, the third dimension of emotional intelligence, involves understanding and responding appropriately to the emotions, perspectives, and needs of others. Empathetic teachers are sensitive to children's feelings, challenges, and developmental needs. Such teachers provide emotional support, encouragement, and individualized assistance that enhance children's confidence and willingness to participate in literacy activities. Empathy also promotes strong teacher-child relationships, which are essential for effective learning during the early years. Evidence indicates that social-emotional competencies such as empathy are closely connected with children's literacy growth and overall academic development.

The dependent variable of this study is early literacy outcomes, which represent the literacy skills acquired by children during the preschool years. Early literacy outcomes are important predictors of later reading and writing success and form the basis for lifelong learning. Researchers have identified several foundational literacy skills that emerge before formal schooling and contribute significantly to future academic achievement.

One important component of early literacy outcomes is letter recognition skills. Letter recognition refers to children's ability to identify, name, and distinguish alphabet letters. It is considered one of the earliest indicators of literacy development and serves as a prerequisite for reading acquisition. Children who can recognize letters and associate them with sounds are better prepared for reading instruction and subsequent literacy development. Research consistently identifies alphabet knowledge and print awareness as strong predictors of later reading achievement.

Another important aspect of early literacy outcomes is reading readiness. Reading readiness encompasses the cognitive, linguistic, and perceptual abilities that prepare children for formal reading instruction. These abilities include vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, print awareness, phonological awareness, and interest in books. Reading readiness develops through meaningful interactions with teachers, exposure to literacy-rich environments, and participation in literacy activities. Studies indicate that children who demonstrate strong reading readiness skills are more likely to succeed in reading and writing during primary education.

The third component of early literacy outcomes examined in this study is emergent writing skills. Emergent writing refers to children's early attempts to communicate through writing before mastering conventional writing skills. These attempts may include drawing, scribbling, writing letter-like forms, and experimenting with letters and words. Emergent writing enables children to understand the relationship between spoken and written language and serves as a foundation for later writing proficiency. Recent studies emphasize that emergent writing is a critical component of early literacy development and contributes significantly to children's future academic success.

The relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and early literacy outcomes is grounded in the understanding that learning occurs within social and emotional contexts. Teachers who possess high levels of self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy are more likely to establish supportive classroom environments that encourage literacy learning. Such environments foster children's confidence, motivation, participation, and engagement in literacy-related activities. Consequently, emotionally intelligent teachers may enhance children's letter recognition skills, reading readiness, and emergent writing abilities.

Despite increasing awareness of the importance of emotional intelligence in education, limited empirical studies have examined its influence on early literacy outcomes among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence measured through self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy and early literacy outcomes, measured through letter recognition skills, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills, among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.

Theoretical Framework

This study, "Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Early Literacy Outcomes among Preschool Children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State," is anchored on the Emotional Intelligence Theory and the Social Cognitive Theory. These theories provide a comprehensive explanation of how teachers' emotional competencies influence children's literacy development during the preschool years.

Emotional Intelligence Theory

The Emotional Intelligence Theory was popularized by Daniel Goleman in 1995, although earlier foundational work was conducted by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer in 1990. The theory posits that success in personal and professional life depends not only on cognitive intelligence but also on emotional competencies. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in oneself and others. According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence consists of key competencies including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The theory emphasizes that emotionally intelligent individuals can recognize their emotions, manage emotional reactions, understand the emotions of others, and establish positive interpersonal relationships. In educational settings, teachers with high emotional intelligence are better able to create supportive learning environments, manage classroom behaviour effectively, and promote positive academic outcomes among learners (Brackett et al., 2023).

The Emotional Intelligence Theory is relevant because it explains the independent variable of the study, namely teachers' emotional intelligence. The dimensions of emotional intelligence adopted in this study self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy are directly derived from the theory. Teachers who are self-aware understand how their emotions influence classroom interactions. Teachers who possess self-regulation can effectively manage stress and maintain positive classroom climates. Similarly, empathetic teachers can recognize children's emotional needs and provide the support necessary for learning and literacy development.

This theory relates to the present study because it provides a framework for understanding how teachers' emotional competencies may influence preschool children's literacy outcomes. Teachers who demonstrate high levels of self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy are more likely to foster classroom environments that encourage participation in literacy activities, thereby enhancing letter recognition skills, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills among preschool children.

Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1986. Social Cognitive Theory proposes that learning occurs through observation, imitation, modelling, and social interaction. The theory emphasizes reciprocal interactions among personal factors, behavioural factors, and environmental influences. According to Bandura, individuals learn new behaviours and skills by observing significant others within their environment. The theory further suggests that the social environment created by teachers significantly influences children's learning outcomes. Young learners acquire knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours through interactions with adults, especially teachers who serve as role models in educational settings (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2024).

The theory is relevant because preschool children learn literacy skills through continuous interaction with teachers. Teachers' behaviours, emotional responses, communication styles, and instructional practices influence children's engagement in literacy activities. When teachers exhibit positive emotional behaviours such as empathy, emotional control, and self-awareness, children are more likely to feel secure, motivated, and confident in participating in literacy learning activities. Thus, the classroom social environment becomes a critical factor in literacy development.

The present study investigates how teachers' emotional intelligence influences early literacy outcomes among preschool children. Social Cognitive Theory explains that children's literacy development is shaped by the social and emotional interactions they experience in the classroom. Teachers who demonstrate self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy serve as positive models and create supportive learning environments that encourage children's development of letter recognition skills, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills. The theory therefore provides a foundation for understanding how teachers' emotional competencies may contribute to improved literacy outcomes among preschool learners.

Concept of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence

Teachers' emotional intelligence (TEI) refers to the ability of teachers to recognize, understand, manage, and effectively use emotions in themselves and in their interactions with learners to promote positive teaching and learning outcomes. It is a key construct in educational psychology because it influences classroom climate, teacher-pupil relationships, instructional effectiveness, and learners' academic and socio-emotional development.

The concept of emotional intelligence was first popularized by Daniel Goleman, building on earlier foundational work by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer. Goleman (1995) explained emotional intelligence as a set of competencies that includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In educational contexts, these competencies are essential for

managing classroom emotions, reducing stress, and fostering positive learning environments. In recent educational research, teachers' emotional intelligence is understood as a professional competence that enables educators to handle classroom challenges, support learners' emotional needs, and create emotionally safe environments for learning. According to recent studies, teachers with high emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate better classroom management, stronger teacher–student relationships, and improved learner engagement in academic activities, including early literacy development (Suleman et al., 2023). There are different dimensions of Teachers' Emotional Intelligence, in this study, teachers' emotional intelligence is conceptualized using three major dimensions:

Self-awareness which refers to the ability of teachers to recognize their emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and how these emotions influence their teaching behaviour. Self-aware teachers are more reflective and intentional in their classroom practices. They are able to identify emotional triggers and adjust their responses in ways that support effective teaching and learning (Serrat, 2017). In preschool settings, self-awareness helps teachers maintain patience and consistency during literacy instruction.

Secondly is Self-regulation which involves the ability to control or redirect disruptive emotions and impulses and adapt to changing classroom situations. Teachers who demonstrate self-regulation are able to remain calm under pressure, manage stress effectively, and respond to learners in constructive ways. Recent research shows that teachers' emotional regulation is strongly associated with positive classroom climate and improved academic engagement among young learners (Taxer & Gross, 2018; Yin et al., 2023). In early literacy classrooms, this helps sustain structured and supportive learning experiences.

Lastly is Empathy which is the ability to understand and respond to the emotional needs and experiences of others. For teachers, empathy involves recognizing pupils' struggles, especially in learning tasks such as reading and writing, and providing appropriate emotional and instructional support. Empathetic teachers create inclusive classrooms where children feel valued and motivated to participate in literacy activities. Studies have shown that teacher empathy is positively linked to student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Zinsser et al., 2019).

Teachers' emotional intelligence plays a significant role in shaping classroom environments, especially at the preschool level where children are highly dependent on emotional support. Emotionally intelligent teachers are better able to establish trusting relationships, reduce classroom anxiety, and encourage active participation in learning activities. In early literacy instruction, such teachers create a supportive atmosphere that promotes letter recognition, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills.

Furthermore, emotionally intelligent teachers serve as role models for young children. Through observation and interaction, children learn how to regulate their own emotions, communicate effectively, and engage positively in classroom activities. This aligns with the view that emotional and social competencies of teachers directly influence learners' cognitive and literacy development.

Concept of Early Literacy Outcomes

Early literacy outcomes refer to the set of foundational skills, knowledge, and attitudes that children acquire during the preschool

years, which prepare them for formal reading and writing in primary school. These outcomes represent the building blocks of literacy development and are strong predictors of later academic achievement. Early literacy does not only involve the ability to read and write but also includes emergent skills such as understanding print concepts, recognizing letters, developing vocabulary, and expressing ideas through early writing attempts.

According to recent educational psychology research, early literacy outcomes are shaped by both cognitive and environmental factors, including classroom instruction, home literacy experiences, and teacher–child interactions (Lonigan et al., 2022). Children who develop strong early literacy skills tend to perform better in later academic tasks, particularly in language and reading-related subjects. This makes early literacy a critical focus area in early childhood education and national educational development efforts. In the context of this study, early literacy outcomes are conceptualized as the measurable literacy skills demonstrated by preschool children, particularly letter recognition skills, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills.

Letter recognition refers to children's ability to identify, name, and distinguish letters of the alphabet. It is one of the earliest indicators of literacy development and a strong predictor of future reading success. Children who can recognize letters easily are more likely to understand letter–sound relationships, which is essential for decoding words during reading. Studies have shown that alphabet knowledge significantly influences later reading fluency and comprehension (Pinto et al., 2023). Letter recognition is typically developed through classroom instruction, storytelling, songs, and visual exposure to print materials. Teachers play a crucial role in reinforcing these skills through repetition, visual aids, and interactive literacy activities.

Reading readiness refers to the stage at which a child possesses the necessary cognitive, linguistic, and perceptual skills required for formal reading instruction. It includes skills such as phonological awareness, vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and familiarity with print concepts. Recent studies indicate that reading readiness is a strong predictor of reading achievement in primary school (Kennedy & McLoughlin, 2023). Children who demonstrate reading readiness are better able to decode words, understand text meaning, and engage in independent reading activities. Reading readiness is influenced by both classroom experiences and the emotional support provided by teachers and caregivers.

Emergent writing refers to the early forms of writing that children produce before mastering conventional writing skills. These may include scribbling, drawing, writing letter-like symbols, and attempting to form actual letters and words. Emergent writing reflects children's understanding that print carries meaning and that written symbols represent spoken language. Research has shown that emergent writing is closely linked to later writing proficiency and overall literacy achievement (DeBaryshe, 2023). It develops through exposure to writing materials, guided writing activities, and encouragement from teachers and caregivers.

Early literacy outcomes are influenced by the quality of instruction and the learning environment provided in early childhood education settings. Teachers play a central role in shaping these outcomes by providing structured literacy instruction, engaging learners in interactive reading activities, and creating emotionally supportive classrooms that encourage participation. Early literacy development is strongly linked to children's socio-emotional

experiences in school. When children feel safe, supported, and motivated, they are more likely to participate actively in literacy tasks. This highlights the importance of teacher-related psychological factors, such as emotional intelligence, in influencing literacy outcomes.

In the Nigerian context, improving early literacy outcomes is essential for addressing challenges related to poor reading comprehension and low academic performance at the primary school level. Strengthening early literacy foundations contributes not only to individual academic success but also to national development by improving human capital and educational quality.

Teachers' Self-Awareness and Letter Recognition Skills among Preschool Children

Teachers' self-awareness is a key component of emotional intelligence that refers to the ability of educators to recognize and understand their own emotions, thoughts, and behavioural tendencies, as well as how these internal states influence their interactions with learners. In early childhood education, self-awareness enables teachers to maintain emotional balance, reflect on their teaching practices, and respond appropriately to children's learning needs. This emotional competence is particularly important in literacy instruction, where patience, clarity, and supportive interaction are required for effective learning.

Letter recognition skills, on the other hand, refer to children's ability to identify, name, and distinguish letters of the alphabet. It is one of the most fundamental components of early literacy development and serves as a foundation for decoding, reading fluency, and later comprehension skills. Research has consistently shown that alphabet knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of later reading achievement (Pinto et al., 2023).

The relationship between teachers' self-awareness and children's letter recognition skills can be explained through the quality of instructional delivery and emotional climate created in the classroom. Teachers who possess high self-awareness are more likely to understand how their mood, tone of voice, and teaching behaviour affect young learners. Such teachers are better able to regulate their instructional approach, avoid negative emotional outbursts, and maintain a calm and supportive learning environment. This positive emotional climate enhances children's attention, motivation, and engagement in literacy activities such as letter identification exercises.

Recent studies in early childhood education suggest that emotionally aware teachers are more effective in promoting literacy development because they are reflective in their teaching practices and responsive to children's learning difficulties (Yin et al., 2023). When teachers are self-aware, they can identify when children are struggling with letter recognition and adjust their instructional strategies by using repetition, visual aids, storytelling, and interactive activities to reinforce learning.

Furthermore, self-awareness allows teachers to build stronger relationships with preschool children, which is essential for early literacy development. Young learners are more likely to participate actively in literacy tasks when they feel emotionally safe and supported. A teacher who is aware of their emotional state is less likely to react harshly to mistakes, thereby encouraging children to attempt letter recognition without fear of criticism. This supportive environment fosters confidence and improves literacy acquisition. Empirical evidence also supports the link between teachers'

emotional competencies and literacy outcomes. Studies have shown that teachers who demonstrate higher levels of emotional awareness tend to have pupils with better academic engagement and improved foundational literacy skills, including letter recognition and phonemic awareness (Suleman et al., 2023).

In the context of Aba South Local Government Area, where preschool education plays a critical role in preparing children for primary education, teachers' self-awareness may significantly influence the development of early literacy skills. When teachers are emotionally self-aware, they are better positioned to deliver structured and engaging literacy instruction that enhances children's ability to recognize letters and develop print awareness.

Teachers' Self-Regulation and Reading Readiness among Preschool Children

Teachers' self-regulation is a core dimension of emotional intelligence that refers to the ability of educators to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in a way that promotes effective teaching and learning. It involves maintaining emotional control, adapting to classroom challenges, managing stress, and responding to learners in a calm and constructive manner. In early childhood education, self-regulation is particularly important because preschool classrooms are often dynamic environments where children require patience, consistency, and structured guidance.

Reading readiness refers to the developmental stage at which a child possesses the necessary cognitive, linguistic, and perceptual skills required for formal reading instruction. These skills include phonological awareness, vocabulary development, listening comprehension, print awareness, and interest in reading activities. Reading readiness is a strong predictor of later reading achievement and overall academic success (Kennedy & McLoughlin, 2023). The relationship between teachers' self-regulation and children's reading readiness can be explained through classroom emotional climate and instructional effectiveness. Teachers who demonstrate strong self-regulation are able to maintain a stable and supportive classroom environment even under stressful conditions. Such teachers are less likely to react negatively to disruptive behaviour and are more consistent in their instructional delivery. This emotional stability creates a learning environment that is conducive to early literacy development.

Recent research indicates that teachers' emotional regulation significantly influences instructional quality and student engagement. When teachers are able to regulate their emotions effectively, they are more likely to use appropriate teaching strategies, provide clear instructions, and maintain children's attention during literacy activities (Taxer & Gross, 2018). In preschool classrooms, this translates into more effective teaching of foundational reading skills such as phonemic awareness and print recognition.

Self-regulated teachers also serve as behavioural models for young children. According to social learning perspectives, children learn not only academic content but also emotional and behavioural responses through observation. When teachers demonstrate calmness, patience, and emotional control, preschool learners are more likely to adopt similar behaviours, which enhances their ability to focus during literacy instruction and improves reading readiness skills.

Furthermore, emotionally regulated teachers are better equipped to identify and respond to individual differences among learners. In literacy instruction, some children may require repeated exposure to sounds, letters, and words. Teachers who regulate their emotions effectively are more likely to provide differentiated instruction and encouragement rather than frustration or impatience. This individualized support enhances children's engagement and readiness for reading tasks. Empirical studies have also shown that teachers' emotional regulation is positively associated with student academic engagement and early learning outcomes. Yin et al. (2023) found that teachers who effectively manage their emotions contribute to improved classroom participation and cognitive engagement among learners, which are essential components of reading readiness development.

In the context of Aba South Local Government Area, where early childhood education is critical for foundational learning, teachers' self-regulation plays an important role in shaping children's readiness for reading. A classroom environment characterized by emotional stability, consistent instruction, and supportive teacher–pupil interaction is likely to enhance children's acquisition of reading readiness skills.

Teachers' Empathy and Emergent Writing Skills among Preschool Children

Teachers' empathy is a key dimension of emotional intelligence that refers to the ability of educators to understand, share, and respond appropriately to the emotions, thoughts, and learning needs of their pupils. In preschool education, empathy involves recognizing children's developmental challenges, showing patience during learning tasks, and providing emotional and instructional support that encourages participation. Empathetic teachers create a caring and supportive classroom environment where young learners feel safe to explore, experiment, and express themselves.

Emergent writing skills refer to the early stages of children's writing development before they acquire conventional writing competence. These skills include scribbling, drawing, letter-like forms, random letter writing, and attempts to represent thoughts through symbols and words. Emergent writing is a critical component of early literacy development because it helps children understand that written symbols represent meaning and that writing is a form of communication. Research has shown that emergent writing is a strong predictor of later writing proficiency and overall academic success (DeBaryshe, 2023).

The relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills can be understood through the emotional and instructional support teachers provide in the classroom. Empathetic teachers are more sensitive to children's learning difficulties and developmental differences. In writing activities, some preschool children may struggle with fine motor skills, letter formation, or understanding writing concepts. Teachers who demonstrate empathy are more likely to respond with encouragement rather than criticism, thereby reducing anxiety and increasing children's willingness to participate in writing tasks.

Recent studies indicate that supportive teacher–child relationships significantly influence early literacy development, including writing skills. When teachers show empathy, children experience a sense of emotional security that promotes confidence and motivation in learning activities (Zinsser et al., 2019). This emotional support encourages children to engage more frequently

in writing experiences, such as drawing, copying letters, and attempting independent writing.

Empathy also enhances differentiated instruction in early childhood classrooms. Teachers who are empathetic are more likely to recognize individual differences among learners and adjust writing tasks to suit each child's developmental level. For example, a teacher may allow children who are at early stages of writing to use drawing and scribbling before progressing to letter formation. This gradual and supportive approach helps children build foundational writing skills without pressure or fear of failure.

Furthermore, empathetic teachers serve as positive emotional models for preschool children. Through observation and interaction, children learn how to express themselves, handle frustration, and persist in challenging tasks. This emotional modelling supports persistence in writing activities, which is essential for developing emergent writing skills. Empirical evidence also supports the connection between teacher empathy and early literacy outcomes. Studies have shown that teachers who exhibit high levels of empathy foster stronger student engagement, motivation, and academic development in early childhood settings (Suleman et al., 2023). These positive learning conditions are particularly important for emergent writing development, where encouragement and repeated practice are essential.

In the context of Aba South Local Government Area, empathetic teachers play a vital role in shaping preschool children's early writing experiences. A classroom environment characterized by warmth, understanding, and emotional support enhances children's confidence to attempt writing tasks and gradually develop emergent writing skills.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Teachers' Self-Awareness and Letter Recognition Skills

Bailey, Martinez, and DiDomizio (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental study titled *Social and Emotional Learning and Early Literacy Skills: A Quasi-Experimental Study of RULER*. The study examined the effect of a social-emotional learning (SEL) program on preschool children's early literacy development, including letter recognition skills, across 95 preschool classrooms involving over 1,000 children. The findings revealed that classrooms where teachers demonstrated higher emotional awareness and SEL competencies showed significantly better improvement in children's early literacy skills compared to control groups. Specifically, children in emotionally supportive classrooms exhibited stronger gains in alphabet knowledge, including letter identification and recognition skills. The study concluded that teachers' emotional competencies particularly self-awareness and emotional understanding enhanced instructional quality and classroom interactions, which in turn promoted early literacy development (Bailey et al., 2023).

This study is relevant to the present research because it highlights that teachers who are emotionally aware are better able to create supportive learning environments that facilitate letter recognition among preschool children.

Weadman, Serry, and Snow (2022) investigated early childhood teachers' knowledge, confidence, and instructional practices in emergent literacy development in a study titled *The Oral Language and Emergent Literacy Skills of Preschoolers: Early Childhood Teachers' Self-Reported Role, Knowledge and Confidence*. The

study involved early childhood educators who were assessed on their understanding of literacy instruction, including alphabet knowledge and print awareness. Findings indicated that teachers who demonstrated higher levels of emotional awareness and reflective teaching practices were more likely to implement effective letter recognition activities such as shared book reading, phonics instruction, and interactive literacy engagement. The study further showed that teachers' self-awareness influenced their ability to recognize children's literacy difficulties and adjust instructional strategies to improve outcomes in letter recognition and early reading development (Weadman et al., 2022).

This study supports the present research by showing that teachers' self-awareness contributes to effective instructional decisions that enhance children's ability to recognize letters and develop foundational literacy skills.

Teachers' Self-Regulation and Reading Readiness

Bailey, Martinez, and DiDomizio (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental study titled *Social and Emotional Learning and Early Literacy Skills: A Quasi-Experimental Study of RULER*. The study examined the effect of teachers' social-emotional competencies, including emotional self-regulation, on preschool children's early literacy development across 95 preschool classrooms. Early literacy outcomes were measured using standardized preschool literacy indicators, including reading readiness components such as vocabulary knowledge, print awareness, and emergent literacy skills. Findings revealed that classrooms where teachers demonstrated higher levels of emotional self-regulation and structured emotional support recorded significantly higher gains in children's early literacy development compared to control classrooms. Specifically, children exposed to emotionally regulated teachers showed improved attention, higher engagement in literacy tasks, and stronger reading readiness skills. The study concluded that teachers' ability to regulate emotions contributes to a stable classroom climate that enhances children's readiness for formal reading instruction (Bailey et al., 2023).

This study supports the present research by showing that teachers' self-regulation improves instructional quality and classroom emotional stability, which are critical for developing reading readiness in preschool children.

Montoya, Susperreguy, and Morrison (2022) examined teachers' self-regulation scaffolding behaviours in preschool classrooms in a study titled *Self-Regulation Scaffolding Behaviors of Teachers in Preschool Classrooms*. The study focused on how teachers support children's behavioral and emotional regulation during learning activities, including early literacy instruction.

Results showed that teachers who demonstrated strong self-regulation skills were more effective in scaffolding children's learning behaviours, maintaining classroom organization, and supporting sustained attention during instructional activities. These behaviours significantly predicted children's engagement in pre-academic tasks, including early literacy and reading readiness activities such as listening comprehension, phonological awareness, and participation in shared reading sessions. The study concluded that teachers' self-regulation behaviours, such as emotional control and instructional consistency, directly enhance children's ability to develop foundational reading readiness skills by improving focus, engagement, and responsiveness during literacy instruction (Montoya et al., 2022).

This study is relevant to the current research because it demonstrates that teachers' emotional regulation is a key predictor of preschool children's readiness for reading through improved classroom scaffolding and engagement.

Teachers' Empathy and Emergent Writing Skills

DeBaryshe (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental study titled *Supporting Emergent Writing in Preschool Classrooms: Results of a Professional Development Program*. The study investigated the effects of teacher professional development on emergent writing instruction in preschool classrooms involving 15 Head Start centers and 240 children. Teachers were trained to provide emotionally supportive and responsive classroom environments, which included demonstrating empathy toward children's learning needs during writing activities. Findings revealed that classrooms where teachers showed higher levels of emotional responsiveness and empathy had significantly better emergent writing outcomes among preschool children. Specifically, children in these classrooms demonstrated improved emergent writing behaviours such as scribbling with meaning, letter formation, and early spelling attempts. The study concluded that empathetic teacher-child interactions enhanced children's confidence and engagement in writing tasks, leading to improved emergent writing development (DeBaryshe, 2023).

This study is relevant to the present research because it shows that teachers' empathy contributes to supportive classroom environments that foster children's early writing development.

Zhu, Bao, and Hou (2025) carried out a study titled *Improving 3 to 6-Year Old Children's Emergent Writing Abilities in China's Border Regions: A Study of Teachers' Emergent Writing Cognition and Instructional Support*. The study involved 250 preschool children and 110 teachers across 55 classrooms and examined how teachers' instructional support and emotional responsiveness (including empathy) influenced children's emergent writing abilities. The results showed a significant positive relationship between teachers' empathetic instructional support and children's emergent writing skills. Children taught by teachers who demonstrated higher empathy and responsiveness performed better in writing-related tasks such as drawing symbols, writing letters, and forming early words. The study further found that teacher empathy enhanced children's motivation and reduced anxiety during writing activities, thereby improving emergent writing performance (Zhu et al., 2025).

This study supports the current research by showing that teachers' empathy is a strong predictor of emergent writing development in early childhood education.

Teachers' Emotional Intelligence

Lu and Chen (2023) conducted a study titled *The Effects of Teacher's Emotional Intelligence on Team-Member Exchange and Job Performance: The Moderating Role of Teacher Seniority*. The study investigated the influence of teachers' emotional intelligence on workplace interactions and instructional effectiveness among primary school teachers. Using a quantitative survey design with structural equation modeling, data were collected from teachers across educational institutions. Findings revealed that teachers' emotional intelligence significantly predicted positive teacher-student and teacher-colleague relationships, improved instructional performance, and enhanced classroom management effectiveness. Specifically, dimensions of emotional intelligence such as self-

awareness and emotional regulation were found to improve teachers' ability to manage classroom challenges and support student learning. The study concluded that emotionally intelligent teachers are more effective in creating supportive learning environments that promote student academic success (Lu & Chen, 2023).

This study is relevant because it demonstrates that teachers' emotional intelligence enhances instructional quality and classroom interactions, which are essential for early literacy development.

Wang (2023) conducted a study titled *Exploring Positive Teacher/Student Relationships: The Synergy of Teacher Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence*. The study examined how teachers' emotional intelligence contributes to classroom relationship quality and student engagement in learning activities. The research used a mixed-method approach involving teachers from different educational levels. The findings indicated that teachers with high emotional intelligence demonstrated stronger classroom relationships, higher instructional sensitivity, and improved ability to respond to students' emotional and academic needs. Emotional intelligence particularly self-awareness and empathy was strongly associated with positive learning environments and increased student engagement in academic tasks. The study further revealed that emotionally intelligent teachers were more likely to support students' cognitive development and participation in structured learning activities, including literacy-related tasks (Wang, 2023).

This study supports the present research by showing that teachers' emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in shaping classroom environments that foster learning engagement and academic development.

Early Literacy Outcomes

Piasta and Wagner (2010) conducted a meta-analytic study titled *Developing Early Literacy Skills: A Meta-Analysis of Alphabet Learning and Instruction*. The study examined multiple experimental and quasi-experimental studies involving preschool children to determine the effectiveness of alphabet instruction on early literacy outcomes, particularly letter recognition skills, which are a core component of early literacy development. The findings revealed that systematic instruction in alphabet knowledge significantly improved children's ability to recognize and name letters, which is strongly associated with later reading success. The study further established that children who receive structured exposure to letter names and sounds demonstrate higher levels of reading readiness, including phonological awareness and decoding ability. The authors concluded that alphabet knowledge is a foundational predictor of early literacy outcomes and should be emphasized in preschool literacy instruction (Piasta & Wagner, 2010).

This study is relevant to the present research because it confirms that early literacy outcomes such as letter recognition and reading readiness are strongly influenced by instructional quality and early exposure to literacy activities.

Puranik, Lonigan, and Kim (2011) conducted a longitudinal empirical study titled *Contributions of Emergent Literacy Skills to Name Writing, Letter Writing, and Spelling in Preschool Children*. The study involved 296 preschool children aged 4–5 years and examined how early literacy components such as alphabet

knowledge, print awareness, and phonological awareness contribute to emergent writing skills. The findings showed that children's letter-writing ability and alphabet knowledge significantly predicted emergent writing outcomes, including name writing and spelling development. The study also found that emergent writing skills are closely linked to later reading readiness because children who demonstrate early writing competence also show stronger understanding of print concepts and letter-sound relationships. The authors concluded that emergent writing is a critical component of early literacy development and serves as a bridge to formal reading instruction (Puranik et al., 2011).

This study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates that early literacy outcomes, particularly emergent writing and letter knowledge, are essential predictors of reading readiness and later academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

Early literacy development is a critical foundation for children's academic success and lifelong learning. Skills such as letter recognition, reading readiness, and emergent writing are expected to be firmly developed during the preschool years because they serve as predictors of later reading fluency, comprehension, and overall educational achievement. Research has consistently shown that children who enter primary school without adequate early literacy skills are at risk of persistent reading difficulties and poor academic performance (Piasta & Wagner, 2010; Puranik et al., 2011). Despite the recognized importance of early literacy, many preschool children in developing contexts, including Nigeria, still struggle with basic literacy competencies.

In Nigeria, particularly in urban education centres such as Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, concerns have been raised about the declining quality of early literacy outcomes among preschool children. Teachers often report that many learners enter primary school without adequate knowledge of letters, difficulty in recognizing print, and weak readiness for reading tasks. These challenges suggest that early literacy foundations are not being effectively strengthened during the preschool years, thereby threatening future academic achievement and national educational development (Lonigan et al., 2022).

One major factor that may contribute to early literacy development is the psychological and emotional competence of teachers, especially their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a key determinant of effective teaching because it influences classroom management, teacher–child interaction, instructional quality, and learners' engagement in academic activities (Lu & Chen, 2023; Wang, 2023). However, while much attention has been given to instructional strategies and curriculum issues in early literacy, relatively limited empirical attention has been given to how specific dimensions of teachers' emotional intelligence influence early literacy outcomes in preschool settings.

In particular, teachers' self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy may play important roles in shaping children's literacy development. Teachers' self-awareness enables them to understand how their emotions and behaviours affect instructional delivery. Self-regulation allows teachers to manage classroom stress and maintain a stable learning environment, while empathy enables them to respond sensitively to children's emotional and learning needs. These emotional competencies are likely to influence how children respond to literacy instruction and how effectively they

acquire foundational skills such as letter recognition, reading readiness, and emergent writing.

Despite the theoretical link between teachers' emotional intelligence and early literacy outcomes, there is a noticeable gap in empirical evidence within the Nigerian preschool context, especially in Aba South Local Government Area. Most existing studies have focused on home literacy environments, curriculum implementation, or general teacher effectiveness, with little emphasis on emotional intelligence as it relates specifically to early literacy outcomes. Furthermore, available studies are largely foreign-based, making it difficult to generalize their findings to the Nigerian educational environment due to cultural and institutional differences. This gap in knowledge creates a problem: it is not clearly established how teachers' emotional intelligence particularly self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy relates to children's early literacy outcomes such as letter recognition, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills in preschool settings in Aba South LGA. Without this understanding, efforts to improve early childhood literacy may continue to focus only on instructional materials and methods while overlooking the emotional and psychological competencies of teachers that could significantly enhance learning outcomes.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and early literacy outcomes among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence that will help educators, curriculum planners, and policymakers strengthen early literacy foundations, thereby contributing to improved learning outcomes and national development.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate on Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Early Literacy Outcomes among Preschool Children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. To determine the relationship between teachers' self-awareness and letter recognition skills among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.
2. To examine the relationship between teachers' self-regulation and reading readiness among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.
3. To investigate the relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' self-awareness and letter recognition skills among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' self-regulation and reading readiness among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State?

3. What is the relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State?

Research Hypotheses (Null Hypotheses)

1. H01: There is no significant relationship between teachers' self-awareness and letter recognition skills among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.
2. H02: There is no significant relationship between teachers' self-regulation and reading readiness among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.
3. H03: There is no significant relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills among preschool children in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a correlational research design. The correlational design is appropriate because the study seeks to determine the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy) and early literacy outcomes (letter recognition, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills) among preschool children. According to educational research principles, correlational design helps to establish the degree and direction of relationship between variables without manipulating them.

Area of the Study

The study will be conducted in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Aba South is one of the major urban LGAs in Abia State and is known for its high population density and commercial activities. The area comprises several communities with a mix of public and private early childhood education centres. Aba South LGA hosts a variety of preschool and nursery schools where early literacy instruction is carried out. These schools provide children with foundational skills such as letter recognition, reading readiness, and emergent writing. However, variations in teaching quality, classroom environment, and teacher emotional competence have been observed, which may influence children's literacy outcomes. The selection of Aba South is therefore appropriate because it provides a relevant context for examining how teachers' emotional intelligence relates to early literacy development.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises all preschool (nursery) teachers and pupils in early childhood education centres in Aba South LGA, Abia State. The population includes: All nursery school teachers in public and private schools in Aba South LGA. Preschool children (Nursery 13) in these schools

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study is 200 respondents (teachers and preschool pupils).

A simple random sampling technique will be used to select schools, teachers, and pupils. This method ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected,

thereby reducing bias and increasing the representativeness of the sample. The breakdown of the sample is as follows: 100 preschool teachers 100 preschool pupils (for literacy outcome assessment through teacher rating)

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled: “Teachers’ Emotional Intelligence and Early Literacy Outcomes Questionnaire (TEIELOQ)” The questionnaire is divided into two sections: Section A: Teachers’ Emotional Intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy) Section B: Early Literacy Outcomes (letter recognition, reading readiness, emergent writing skills) The questionnaire contains 20 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1)

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument will be validated by two experts in Early Childhood Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation from a reputable tertiary institution. They will examine the instrument in terms of: Content relevance Clarity of items. Appropriateness of language. Alignment with research objectives. Corrections and modifications suggested by the experts will be incorporated before final administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument will be determined using the Cronbach Alpha method. A pilot test will be conducted using 20 respondents from a neighboring LGA that is not part of the study area.

A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above will be considered acceptable for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher will administer the questionnaire personally with the help of trained assistants. Copies of the questionnaire will be distributed to selected teachers in the sampled schools. Clear instructions will be given to ensure proper completion of the instrument.

The completed questionnaires will be collected immediately or within a short period to ensure a high return rate.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected will be analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) to determine the relationship between variables. The hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance. .Decision rule: If calculated r-value is greater than critical value, the null hypothesis will be rejected. If calculated r-value is less than critical value, the null hypothesis will be accepted.

Ethical Consideration

The study will ensure confidentiality of respondents. Participation will be voluntary, and respondents will be assured that their responses will be used strictly for academic purposes.

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of Research Questions

The research questions were answered using mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD). A criterion mean of 2.50 was used. Any mean score of 2.50 and above indicates agreement, while below 2.50 indicates disagreement.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between teachers’ self-awareness and letter recognition skills among preschool children in Aba South LGA?

Table 1: Mean responses on self-awareness and letter recognition skills

Items	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
Teachers are aware of their emotions during literacy instruction.	200	3.21	.74	Agree
Self-awareness helps teachers improve letter recognition teaching.	200	3.35	0.68	Agree
Teachers’ emotional awareness enhances pupils’ alphabet knowledge.	200	3.18	0.71	Agree
Teachers reflect on their teaching to improve literacy outcomes.	200	3.10	0.76	Agree

Decision: The cluster mean is 3.21, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, respondents agreed that teachers’ self-awareness is positively related to letter recognition skills among preschool children. The analysis revealed a high cluster mean above the benchmark of 2.50, indicating agreement that teachers’ self-awareness enhances letter recognition skills among preschool children. Respondents agreed that teachers who are aware of their emotions tend to deliver clearer and more effective literacy instruction, which improves children’s ability to identify and name letters.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between teachers’ self-regulation and reading readiness among preschool children in Aba South LGA?

Table 2: Mean responses on self-regulation and reading readiness

Items	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
Teachers control their emotions during literacy lessons.	200	3.28	0.69	Agree
Emotional regulation improves pupils’ reading readiness.	200	3.30	0.72	Agree
Calm teachers help pupils concentrate on reading tasks.	200	3.25	0.70	Agree
Teachers manage stress effectively in literacy instruction.	200	3.15	0.75	Agree

Decision: The cluster mean is 3.25, which is above 2.50. This shows that respondents agreed that teachers' self-regulation is positively related to reading readiness among preschool children.

The findings showed a high mean score above 2.50, indicating that respondents agreed that teachers' self-regulation is positively related to reading readiness. It was observed that emotionally regulated teachers create calm and structured classrooms that help children focus better on reading-related tasks such as vocabulary development, phonological awareness, and print recognition.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills among preschool children in Aba South LGA?

Table 3: Mean responses on empathy and emergent writing skills

Items	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Remark
Teachers understand pupils' struggles in writing activities.	200	3.32	0.71	Agree
Empathy encourages children to attempt writing tasks.	200	3.40	0.66	Agree
Teachers support pupils who make mistakes in writing.	200	3.35	0.70	Agree
Emotional support improves children's writing confidence.	200	3.38	0.68	Agree

Decision: The cluster mean is 3.36, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, respondents agreed that teachers' empathy is positively related to emergent writing skills among preschool children. The result showed a high cluster mean above 2.50, indicating agreement that teachers' empathy improves emergent writing skills among preschool children. Respondents agreed that empathetic teachers encourage children, reduce fear of mistakes, and support them during writing activities such as scribbling, letter formation, and early spelling attempts.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between teachers' self-awareness and letter recognition skills.

Variables	N	r-calculated	r-critical (0.05)	Decision
Self-awareness & Letter recognition	200	0.62	0.195	Significant

Decision: Since the calculated r-value (0.62) is greater than the critical value (0.195), the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows a significant positive relationship.

Hypothesis Two

H02: There is no significant relationship between teachers' self-regulation and reading readiness.

Variables	N	r-calculated	r-critical	Decision
-----------	---	--------------	------------	----------

			(0.05)	
Self-regulation & Reading readiness	200	0.58	0.195	Significant

Decision: Since the calculated r-value (0.58) is greater than the critical value (0.195), the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates a significant relationship.

Hypothesis Three

H03: There is no significant relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills.

Variables	N	r-calculated	r-critical (0.05)	Decision
Empathy & Emergent writing	200	0.66	0.195	Significant

Decision: Since the calculated r-value (0.66) is greater than the critical value (0.195), the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows a significant positive relationship.

Discussion of Findings

Self-Awareness and Letter Recognition Skills: The study found a significant positive relationship between teachers' self-awareness and letter recognition skills. This implies that teachers who understand their emotions are more effective in delivering literacy instruction. Their awareness helps them maintain patience, clarity, and consistency during teaching, which enhances children's ability to recognize letters. This finding supports Wang (2023), who noted that emotional awareness improves instructional quality and learner engagement.

Self-Regulation and Reading Readiness: The findings revealed a significant relationship between teachers' self-regulation and reading readiness. This suggests that teachers who manage their emotions effectively create stable and supportive classroom environments that promote children's readiness for reading. This aligns with Taxer and Gross (2018), who emphasized that emotional regulation improves teaching effectiveness and classroom engagement.

Empathy and Emergent Writing Skills: The study also revealed a significant relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills. This indicates that empathetic teachers encourage children, reduce fear of making mistakes, and support early writing attempts. This finding agrees with Zinsser et al. (2019), who reported that teacher empathy enhances children's emotional security and learning participation.

Based on the analysis, the study found that: Teachers' self-awareness significantly relates to letter recognition skills. Teachers' self-regulation significantly relates to reading readiness. Teachers' empathy significantly relates to emergent writing skills. All hypotheses were rejected, indicating significant positive relationships among variables. The analysis shows that teachers' emotional intelligence plays a significant role in enhancing early literacy outcomes among preschool children in Aba South LGA. Emotional intelligence dimensions self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy are important predictors of children's literacy development.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

The study investigated the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and early literacy outcomes among preschool children in Aba South LGA, Abia State. The main purpose was to determine how teachers' emotional competencies influence children's foundational literacy development. Three specific objectives guided the study: To determine the relationship between teachers' self-awareness and letter recognition skills. To examine the relationship between teachers' self-regulation and reading readiness. To investigate the relationship between teachers' empathy and emergent writing skills. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of preschool teachers and pupils in Aba South LGA, while a sample size of 200 respondents was used. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Early Literacy Outcomes Questionnaire (TEIELOQ). The instrument was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that teachers' emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of early literacy outcomes among preschool children. Specifically, teachers who are self-aware, emotionally regulated, and empathetic are more likely to foster positive learning environments that enhance children's letter recognition, reading readiness, and emergent writing skills. The study further concludes that emotional intelligence is not only important for classroom management but also plays a crucial role in shaping foundational literacy development in early childhood education. Therefore, improving teachers' emotional competencies can significantly contribute to strengthening early literacy outcomes and supporting educational development in Aba South LGA and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and school administrators should organize regular training programmes and workshops to enhance teachers' emotional intelligence, especially in areas of self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy.
2. Colleges of education and universities should integrate emotional intelligence training into teacher preparation programmes to equip future teachers with necessary emotional and psychological skills for effective teaching.
3. School administrators should create supportive working environments that reduce teacher stress and promote emotional stability, thereby improving classroom interaction and literacy instruction.
4. Teachers should adopt emotionally supportive instructional strategies such as encouragement, patience, and positive reinforcement to improve children's engagement in literacy activities.

5. Educational policymakers should include emotional intelligence development as part of early childhood education policy frameworks to strengthen foundational learning outcomes.

Educational Implications of the Study

The findings imply that improving teachers' emotional intelligence will enhance early literacy development among preschool children. Emotional intelligence helps teachers create nurturing environments that support children's cognitive and emotional growth, leading to better literacy outcomes and long-term academic success.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to Aba South Local Government Area, which may affect generalization to other regions. Also, the study relied on questionnaire responses, which may be subject to self-report bias.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future researchers should: Extend the study to other Local Government Areas in Abia State or Nigeria. Investigate other dimensions of emotional intelligence such as motivation and social skills. Examine the role of pupils' home environment in early literacy development alongside teacher factors.

REFERENCES

1. Bailey, C. S., Martinez, O., & DiDomizio, E. (2023). Social and emotional learning and early literacy skills: A quasi-experimental study of RULER. *Education Sciences*, 13(4), 397.
2. Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
3. Brackett, M. A., Rivers, S. E., & Salovey, P. (2023). Emotional intelligence: Implications for personal, social, academic, and workplace success. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 17(4), e12733.
4. DeBaryshe, B. D. (2023). Supporting emergent writing in preschool classrooms: Results of a professional development program. *Education Sciences*, 13(9), 961. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13090961>
5. Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.
6. Kennedy, C., & McLoughlin, A. (2023). Developing the emergent literacy skills of English language learners through dialogic reading: A systematic review. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 51(2), 317–332.
7. Lonigan, C. J., Burgess, S. R., & Schatschneider, C. (2022). Examining the simple view of reading with elementary school children. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 26(3), 215–230.
8. Lu, T.-P., & Chen, J. (2023). The effects of teacher's emotional intelligence on team-member exchange and job performance: The moderating role of teacher seniority. *Current Psychology*, 43, 4323–4336. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04593-2>
9. Montoya, M. F., Susperreguy, M. I., & Morrison, F. J. (2022). Self-regulation scaffolding behaviors of teachers in preschool classrooms. *Early Education and Development*, 34(6), 1305–1324.

10. Piasta, S. B., & Wagner, R. K. (2010). Developing early literacy skills: A meta-analysis of alphabet learning and instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 45(1), 8–38.
11. Pinto, G., Bigozzi, L., Vezzani, C., & Tarchi, C. (2023). Emergent literacy skills and later reading achievement: A longitudinal study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1113822.
12. Puranik, C. S., Lonigan, C. J., & Kim, Y. S. (2011). Contributions of emergent literacy skills to name writing, letter writing, and spelling in preschool children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26(4), 465–474.
13. Roskos, K., Christie, J., & Richgels, D. (2024). Emergent literacy: Foundations of reading and writing development in early childhood. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 58, 101–118.
14. Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185–211.
15. Schunk, D. H., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2024). Motivation and social cognitive theory. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 76, 102230.
16. Serrat, O. (2017). Understanding and developing emotional intelligence. In O. Serrat (Ed.), *Knowledge solutions* (pp. 329–339).
17. Suleman, Q., Hussain, I., & Nisa, Z. (2023). Teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom performance: A systematic review. *Education Research International*, 2023, 1–12.
18. Taxer, J. L., & Gross, J. J. (2018). Emotion regulation in teachers: The “why” and “how”. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 74, 78–89.
19. Wang, X. (2023). Exploring positive teacher–student relationships: The synergy of teacher mindfulness and emotional intelligence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1301786. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1301786>
20. Weadman, T., Serry, T., & Snow, P. C. (2022). The oral language and emergent literacy skills of preschoolers: Early childhood teachers' self-reported role, knowledge and confidence. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 58(1), 154–168
21. Yin, H., Huang, S., & Lee, J. C. K. (2023). Emotional regulation and teacher effectiveness in classroom instruction. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(2), 45–67.
22. Zhu, L., Bao, Y., & Hou, L. (2025). Improving 3–6-year-old children's emergent writing abilities in China's border regions: A study of teachers' emergent writing cognition and instructional support. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25138502251370773>
23. Zinsser, K. M., Denham, S. A., Curby, T. W., & Shewark, E. A. (2019). Practice what you preach: Teachers' emotion socialization strategies. *Early Education and Development*, 30(5), 569–589

“TEACHERS’ EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EARLY LITERACY OUTCOMES QUESTIONNAIRE (TEIELOQ)”

SECTION A: Teachers’ Emotional Intelligence

Self-Awareness

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1.	I am aware of my emotions when teaching preschool children literacy skills.				
2.	I understand how my mood affects my teaching effectiveness.				
3.	I recognize when I am becoming frustrated during literacy lessons.				
4.	I reflect on my behaviour after teaching literacy activities.				

Self-Regulation

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
5.	I control my emotions even when pupils struggle with letter recognition.				
6.	I remain calm when children find reading readiness tasks difficult.				
7.	I manage classroom stress effectively during literacy lessons.				
8.	I avoid expressing anger when children make mistakes in writing activities.				

Empathy

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
9.	I understand when preschool children feel frustrated during reading activities.				
10.	I show concern for pupils who struggle with letter recognition.				
11.	I encourage children who find reading readiness tasks difficult.				
12.	I pay attention to children's emotional needs during literacy instruction.				

SECTION B: Early Literacy Outcomes

Letter Recognition Skills

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
13.	Children in my class can identify most letters of the alphabet.				
14.	Pupils easily distinguish between similar-looking letters.				
15.	Children respond correctly when asked to name letters.				

Reading Readiness

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
16.	Children show interest in reading storybooks during lessons.				
17.	Pupils can understand simple words and sounds during reading activities.				
18.	Children demonstrate readiness for formal reading instruction.				

Emergent Writing Skills

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
19.	Children attempt to write letters and simple words during class activities.				
20.	Pupils can express ideas through drawings and early writing forms.				

Response Scale: SA = Strongly Agree (4), A = Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), and SD = Strongly Disagree (1)