

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Repositioning Graduate's Employability Through Innovative Binary Skill in Selected Nigerian States

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Abstract: The innovative binary skills involved in this study are social intelligence (SI) and emotional intelligence (EI). It explored repositioning graduates' employability in public and private establishments in selected Nigerian states. The study specifically aims to ascertain the implication of SI quotient as a soft skill (SS) on Nigerian graduates' employability and determine the consequence of emotional intelligence quotient as an SS on their employability. The employed research design is descriptive. The study's population (human resource personnel (HRP)) is 99. The selected states were considered for this study due to the high concentration and availability of agro-allied-based firms. A mixed approach of sampling techniques (multi-stage and total enumeration) was used to sample the HRP of the identified agro-allied firms, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.74. The collected data were analyzed descriptively (frequency count and valid percentage) using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 23. The results reveal that the ability to navigate social settings and maintain relationships tends to increase staff earnings. The test of EI as an SS (the ability to control oneself from disappointment) has given them an added advantage, culminating in monthly earnings and active engagement. The study concluded that for a contemporary human to fit into this fourth industrial revolution, characterized by dimensions and unrestricted disruptions occurring in the employability of Nigerian graduates, possession of SSs is paramount to staying relevant. Additionally, for a functional, socially engaged, result-driven, and complete Nigerian youth, possessing SI and EI skills is of utmost importance. Based on these findings, the study recommends that parents and guardians emphasize the acquisition of SSs early in their children's lives. Furthermore, human resource managers should prioritize the possession of relevant skills when appointing employees to the managerial cadre, due to the sensitivity of such positions.

Keywords: employees, Nigerian graduates, soft skills, entrepreneurship, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, Agro-based.

1. Introduction

The innovative binary entrepreneurship skills involved in this study are social intelligence (SI) and emotional intelligence (EI) in the selected Nigerian states. One of the prerequisites of education at the higher level [1] is the production of employable graduates and entrepreneurs who will contribute their quotas to the formation of enterprises and reduce social ills in Nigeria [2] due to their passion, innovation, and inventiveness. The existing system places low emphasis on the intelligence youths need to navigate the non-static work and, thus, the relevance of incorporating intelligence into the employability framework. Employability skills are essential for securing and maintaining jobs, encompassing both hard and soft skills, such as SI and EI. These skills have become essential in the temporary dynamic working environment by enhancing problem-solving, communication, and teamwork.

Soft skills (SSs) are commonly employed to describe personal competencies such as language and communication skills, social relations, hospitality, and collaborative work, as well as

other personality traits that characterize interpersonal connections. Hard skills (HSs) refer to the talents required to accomplish a specific task or activity, generally regarded as complementary to SSs [3, 4]. The soft and hard skills are practically relevant in Nigeria, though the degree may be another gap. In Nigeria and other countries of the world, communication, leadership, critical thinking, exceptional customer service, self-management, consideration for diversity, sociability, EI, ethical standards, problem-solving, collaboration, and many other SSs have been linked to the success of employees who can secure and maintain jobs [5]. Jalil et al. [6] noted language and group work as other aspects of SSs. The ability to utilize excellent SSs in the workplace benefits both the employer and the employee [7], complemented by HSs. SSs are explained as behaviors that consist of lifetime skills, which can be collective, individual, or community skills [8].

Universally, humans are regarded as social entities. In this light, the social species that possesses social identity can be its better version with the possession of SI. SI is an essential skill and ability pertinent to general career development and progression [9, 10], incorporating a range of complex skills. It has positive effects on personal well-being and collective economic success. However, it should be noted that SI and EI are two closely related concepts that are mutually exclusive and inexhaustible. EI, one of

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the key components of SSs, has been identified as the most significant. EI accelerates the capacity to learn and solve dimensions of challenges. People with high EI can switch moods, which enables them to perform better on complex tasks. In support of this, Checa and Fernández-Berrocal [11] indicated that participants with higher EI easily solve more cognitive tasks than those with a lower EI. This is even truer in Nigeria.

In the Nigerian context, a graduate jobseeker is defined in this study as someone who holds a diploma, degree, or other post-graduate qualification, has not worked since graduating from a polytechnic or university, and is seeking a formal job. He/she has no prior work experience and is defined as a young person with a high school diploma between the ages of 15 and 35. Unemployment is a global phenomenon; it is not a different case in Nigeria, as contemporary jobs have shifted to SSs.

The Nigeria Labour Force Statistics Report for Q1 2024, by the National Bureau of Statistics [12], indicated that the youth unemployment rate in Q4 2022, Q1 2023, Q2 2023, Q3 2023, and Q1 2024 was 8.3%, 6.9%, 7.2%, 8.6%, and 8.4%, respectively.

A significant number of young graduates are missing out on quality education that can afford them a fair start to life [13], and many of them are inadequately equipped with the necessary opportunities to acquire and develop lifelong skills and respond to the ever-changing demands of work and society. Being deliberate about collaborative and work-integrated education to inspire and innovate has many supporting roles in meeting this encumbrance. The Nigerian government is concerned about the rising number of unemployed graduates. Various programs have been established to address this issue, ensuring that graduates have the skills required by each field. A massive number of graduates being shunned into the labour market do not possess the required and specific skills, and graduates who have not adequately polished their skills while still in school are responsible for this phenomenon. These abilities can be used to distinguish them and measure their marketability. Employability is a term frequently used by businesses to assess the marketability of graduates. Academic, connection, personality management, and exploratory skills, which may be soft, digital, or hard talents [14], are all essential employability skills for every graduate. Graduates with these four qualities will not face any difficulties in the employment market.

Given the high level of competition in the market, it is advantageous to have Nigerian graduates with entrepreneurial abilities. These abilities are linked to characteristics that enable graduates to be strong and consistent in their professional development and to be innovative employers who can create wealth and jobs. Educators and policymakers are concerned about enhancing learners' employability skills to meet the demands of the twenty-first-century workplace. To equip the workforce for current and future needs [15], Nigeria and other countries are working on upgrading their skills frameworks, policies, and national infrastructure [16, 17]. From an on-demand perspective, employability refers to the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and commercial strengths that enable graduates to contribute effectively to achieving organizational goals upon starting work. According to popular belief, Nigerian graduates are frequently unemployed because they lack the necessary skills for companies. As a result, there is a scarcity of highly skilled workers who can match employers' demands and a high proportion of youth unemployment in the country [18].

Hamid and Aruleba, as well as Emorinken et al. [19, 20], affirmed that about 300,000 graduates are enrolled in the National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria annually, and over 200 higher institutions produce these graduates. The percentage of employees among them is not up to 20% annually, according to the general

requirement. While SSs are widely recognized, Nigerian graduates face a unique paradox: Despite formal education, fewer than 5% possess the SI and EI needed for workplace adaptability [21]. This study addresses this gap by investigating how these skills influence employability in the highly employment-generating agricultural sector.

Prior research [22, 23] confirms that social and emotional intelligence significantly increases earnings and job retention. However, in Nigeria, where youth unemployment exceeds 8% [12], few studies examine how these skills influence graduate employability in agriculture and agro-allied firms.

The arching implications for individuals and society are underpaying jobs, joblessness, a rise in the informal economy and loss of taxes, being compelled to take low-skill jobs, morale loss, trust erosion of educational value, loss of human capital due to brain drain, coercion into entrepreneurship by necessity to survive, reduced productivity, and an increase in government social support programs. Overdue unemployment leads to depression, anxiety, and social unrest among youth.

The sincere and important question here is, what is responsible for the failure of the remaining 80% to secure employment in the concerned states? Among the employed in Southwest Nigeria, the firms retooled to suit their operations before starting such jobs, unlike the public sector, which did not prioritize productivity and efficiency to the same extent. Since productivity and efficiency matter, companies will only select employees who fit into their efficiency strategy rather than invest resources in retooling them.

Most employability studies have generically examined SSs, but combining SI and EI within the Nigerian agricultural sector is a cutting-edge approach. This would be an early effort to assess the combined impact on graduate employability in selected Nigerian states. By emphasizing the significance of SI and EI to graduate employability, this study would inform the integration of SI and EI into curricular and human resource practices (prioritizing these skills in hiring).

On these premises, the study aims to enhance graduates' employability in public and private establishments across selected Nigerian states through the innovative combination of EI and SI. Notably, the study sought to:

- 1) Ascertain the implications of the SI quotient as an SS on Nigerian graduate employability.
- 2) Determine the consequences of the EI quotient as an SS on Nigerian graduates' employability.

2. Literature Review

A firm comprises people, and its performance is primarily determined by human resource competencies and the type of collaboration that can be established. Human capital is thus a critical element of any business, and its standard significantly impacts the company's ability to achieve its goals [4]. In skills formation, a contrast between intrapsychic/self-oriented and other-oriented/interpersonal skills can be formed first. The first distinction (personal) refers to what a person must comprehend and grow on his or her own, whereas the second (social) refers to what a person can develop through interactions with others. Personal skills are primarily cognitive talents, such as knowledge and reasoning, whereas social skills encompass interpersonal connections [24]. SSs are essential for developing HSs and staying current in changing conditions. A man's HSs enable him to be who he is: a mechanical engineer, physicist, entrepreneur, philosopher, and others. SSs work in a direction different from their role and exceed the profession's rigorous requirements [25, 26]. The current study finds

that, despite the operationalization of SSs in career development, the complementary efforts of HSs are crucial to their success.

SSs encompass all competencies, both directly and indirectly, related to a specific activity. These skills are essential for every position because they involve relationships with fellow members of the organization. Similarly, HSs refer to a person's ability to execute a task effectively. A worker's ability to operate and control a computerized numerical control machine to produce a product is an example of an HS. At the same time, his ability to collaborate with teammates in the same factory unit is evidence of an SS. Thus, SSs are seen as a strategic element in any enterprise; these skills require special commitment from hiring and firing managers. This commitment should not be limited to the recruitment process but should be considered throughout the entire employee's career. The SSs individuals acquire at any level significantly impact the quality of the organization's products, services, and the lives of its workers. The quality of every company's human capital, and thus the outcomes it can achieve, is primarily determined by its skills [3], that is, the capability and collaboration (hard and soft skills, respectively). SSs are important for personal and professional success and are necessary for a candidate to acquire any position. Typically, employers hire new workers, especially recent graduates, based on their SSs rather than HSs. However, this study asserted that the complementary efforts of HSs cannot be underrated. This is also true for technical occupations, such as engineering, as the organization needs to be competitive. Therefore, effective teams and a collaborative working environment are required [3, 4], with consideration for both capabilities and collaboration.

Polakov et al. and Emanuel et al. [27, 28] identified a cause-and-effect association between SSs and the achievement of both individual and professional employees. The current study concludes that SSs predict success in life, as discussed in the previous paragraphs. All of these (future work skills, SSs for talent, transferable skills, twenty-first-century skills, lifelong skills, generic competencies, core competencies for contemporary jobs, core competencies for successful life and a well-living society, key competencies for lifelong learning, skills for social progress) and SSs are the same; that is, they can be used to replace and represent SSs [3, 4]. These lead to empathy, self-awareness, effective communication, self-management, and practical discourse across divides and a social identity vital for developing SSs. The aforementioned transversal talents are necessary for any successful manager and the broader job context. EI is a significant subset of SS [3, 4]. The notion is that academic institutions must not only shape young generations by providing them with HSs to become professionals but also create citizens who can enthusiastically function in society and then assist them in developing their SSs [29, 30].

Teaching SSs is a vital academic activity that should begin in basic school and should not be limited to tertiary institutions and businesses. The development of SSs begins in the home and continues even before the child enters school, since SSs are widely important beyond the workplace but also in everyday life. Therefore, educational institutions must employ techniques and tactics to help students acquire skills that are relevant in any situation [27, 28]. Generally, SSs are sub-grouped into three fundamental categories: personal qualities (EI), interpersonal skills (SI), and additional skills/knowledge.

Humans employ a range of abilities and skills called SI [31, 32] to understand and navigate social conditions and establish relationships; as such, poorer SI negatively impacts well-being. Computers cannot easily delegate tasks that require the ability to interpret nuanced social cues and engage in deliberate dialogue.

The SI developmental phases in every human being are embedded in the biological trait (puberty, continued brain development) and social (transition from early childhood education to kindergarten, primary and secondary school, higher institution, and social time spent with peers), cultural (exposure to people who are from another clime, especially in a nation that is becoming highly multicultural), and psychological developments (gaining independence from their family members and being less dependent on father and mother). Employers' perceptions of SSs have risen dramatically, leading to a more significant emphasis on character and resilience education in schools, which has a substantial impact on career progression [8]. One of the key strengths of SI as a skill is that technology cannot replace it, but it is necessary for navigating the globalized workforce [9, 10]. Furthermore, according to the core findings of [22], earnings can increase by 31% for staff with higher SI.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of human resource managers (63%) would not hire an employee with low levels of SI. 73% of respondents stated that high levels of SI are instrumental to development and progression in the workplace. The result also indicated that 55% of human resource managers believe workers with low SI levels are unlikely to attain senior managerial positions. Employers see SI skills as a core part of career progression rather than academic prowess. It is more important than academic qualifications in a successful life. Yesildag [33] regarded SI as the new success formula, whereas the present study operationalizes it as a novel succeeding technique; Nigerian graduates must stay afloat in their jobs and attain senior management positions.

Similarly, Checa and Fernández-Berrocal [11] empirically asserted that EI competencies are germane to human cognitive control processes. Pritamani [34] states that emotionally intelligent persons might use their flexible nature to adapt to others' techniques and the context to achieve their aims. Checa and Fernández-Berrocal, Ivcevic and Green, and Kim [11, 35, 36] have worked on the influence of EI on cognitive processes, such as decision-making and problem-solving. EI enhances learning and problem-solving abilities; individuals with high EI can effectively manage their emotions, enabling better performance on complex issues. In support of this, [11, 37] indicated that participants with a higher self-reported EI could complete more cognitive tasks than participants with lower EI. People who focus more on their emotions tend to perform better on emotional exercises. EI also has a role in self-regulation, which includes impulse control. For instance, the management of aggression and irresponsible behavior is a function of EI possessed by individuals who take alcohol and abuse drugs [38, 39, 40].

These abilities supplement HSs to improve a person's relationships, job performance, and career opportunities. Other areas of SSs are critical thinking, communication skills, professional practice, listening to others, reflective practice, teamwork, curriculum vitae and application writing, self-assessment, mentoring and peer support, information literacy, creative problem-solving, portfolio management, digital literacy, and assertiveness (tools for delivery, recording, and reflection) [41].

Entrepreneurs should be intelligent, analytical, and efficient risk managers and networkers. He or she should also possess strengths in moral, social, and business ethics, as well as fundamental trading instincts, soft, digital, and hard skills, and a commitment to lifelong learning through various mechanisms. These skills listed in Morrison's definition are essential for an excellent entrepreneur in this information age. An entrepreneur chooses or takes risks by finding business prospects, gathering resources, initiating actions, and forming a company or organization to match that demand or market opportunity [42]. Thus, a relationship exists between being

an entrepreneur in the narrower scope (Nigerian graduates) and employability. Educators, researchers, and employers have all heard and operationalized the word “employability.” It comprises the skills, knowledge, and talents required to secure a job and advance in a career. Due to their failure to meet contemporary labor market standards, graduates of Nigerian higher education institutions (HEIs) have found it challenging to secure employment. Nigerian graduates have consistently lacked the skills necessary for industry breakthroughs and the ability to learn and thrive in an ever-changing world. Graduates from HEIs have been accused of failing to fulfill labor market demands. Several flaws in HEIs are to blame for young people’s inability to find and hold jobs. Employers frequently fault the curriculum and teaching techniques for not producing the future leaders and graduates they want to hire, indicating a failure to collaborate. Employers want graduates with essential leadership abilities, creative and critical thinking, and interpersonal abilities, enabling them to detect and analyze complicated occurrences and evaluate and converge new ideas. As part of the SS components, communication, problem-solving, and lifelong learning are considered essential criteria for competing and succeeding [15].

Employability is based on the idea that people’s economic well-being and a country’s competitive advantage have grown to rely on the workforce’s knowledge, skills, and initiative. Those holding a bachelor’s degree are expected to play a key role in managing the knowledge-driven economy of the future. Due to a lack of agreement and collaboration between graduate students, HEIs, and potential employers, the necessary employability skills are often not acquired. As a result, graduates are frequently unprepared to succeed in the workforce. Graduates’ employability skills are described as their capacity to acquire and demonstrate the information, traits, and attitudes required to obtain and maintain positions where they can be successful and fulfilled in their professions and personal lives [15].

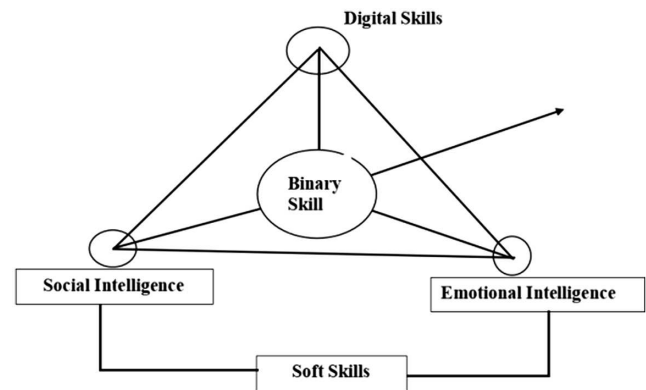
Chastney [43] corroborated the World Bank survey, stating that Nigeria’s agricultural sector is the country’s major labor employer and revenue source. Nigeria’s top industries, which drive the economy and provide the finest jobs for people at all stages of their careers, include oil and gas (contributed 70% of Nigeria’s GDP), agriculture (contributed 25% but employed about 70% of Nigeria’s workforce), and the banking sector (contributed 2.5% GDP and employed over 100,000 graduates). Workers’ reviews, corporate cultures, suitable workspaces, work-life balance, and significant wage structures and perks are used to rank these companies. In the same vein, Capazario et al. [44] claimed in their Nigerian labor supply analysis that the agricultural sector employed approximately 20 million Nigerian graduates in 2019. With this in focus, the study targeted the respondents in the agricultural sector, specifically agro-allied firms.

Several recognized ideas can be used to construct theories that describe how the cognitive, emotional, and social elements interact to impact learners’ behavior when they receive feedback. Some of these include control theory, attribution theory, and aim theory [45].

Control theory: This theory uses feedback and control loops to describe behavior. It contrasts a reference level of performance with the actual measured level of performance in an assessment. The feedback is written to minimize the difference between the intended and measured levels [46].

The control theory is relevant to this study, specifically concerning the performance of Nigerian graduates on the job and their successful promotion to senior management. Attribution theory explains why people react differently to the same event, implying that differences in the perceived reason for the initial outcome lead to varied responses. For example, personal work, intrinsic ability,

Figure 1
Conceptual framework



the influence of others (such as a teacher), or luck may all play a role in mastering a new skill. These attributions are frequently unconscious, but they significantly impact future behavior. Failure due to a lack of skill may discourage future efforts. In contrast, failure due to poor teaching or bad luck may indicate a desire to try again, particularly if the instructor or circumstances are expected to change. According to attribution theory, humans strive to understand and comprehend themselves and their environment, operating as native scientists to construct cause-and-effect linkages for occurrences in their lives [47].

Success or failure can be attributed to either internal or external factors. External attributions are blamed for poor results, while internal attributions are attached to good results [48, 49].

This suggests that mastering and possessing SSs is based on both internal and external attributions over time.

The study will adopt the sociology of education theory to describe employability, in line with the efforts of Fernando et al. and Gwala et al. [16, 17]. The consensus hypothesis emphasizes societal stability and community members’ socialization into shared norms and values. As a result, to maintain balance, individuals and societal institutions collaborate or reach an agreement. The consensus theory of employability is founded on the notion that investing in human capital through generic skill development will assure graduates’ employability and professional advancement [50].

Aruleba and Adediran [51, 52] substantiated the use of theories in this study, supporting each research study with a relevant theoretical background.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptualization of the research variables, particularly the relationships that exist among them. The SSs (SI and EI) are crucial in repositioning graduates for higher employability.

3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design. A well-structured, close-ended questionnaire was used to collect adequate information from the target respondents’ human resource personnel (HRP). The HRP is the population (99) of the study, which also serves as the sample size, as the total population is small and manageable. The southwestern states are Ekiti, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Ogun, and Lagos. Only Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo States are considered for this study due to the high concentration and availability of agro-allied-based firms in these three states. Data were sourced and generated from both secondary (journals, theses, online newspapers) and primary sources (questionnaires). The

Table 1
Multi-stage sampling Technique

Stage	Sampling procedure
1st Stage	Purposive selection of the three states, based on high concentration and availability of agro-allied firms: Oyo State, Lagos State, and Ogun State.
2nd Stage	Purposive selection of the top three sectors that created and employed Nigerian graduates: oil and gas, agriculture, and the banking industry.
3rd Stage	Purposive selection of the highest job creation sub-sector: commercial agriculture (agro-allied firms).
4th Stage	Simple random selection of the four private agro-allied establishments: Farmkconnect (Oyo State), Agropark (Lagos), Amlab Integrated Services (Lagos), Toarleb Farms (Ogun).

identified establishments are the State Ministry of Agriculture (Oyo State), Farmkconnect (Oyo State), Agropark (Lagos State), Amlab Integrated Services (Lagos), and Toarleb Farms (Ogun State). A mixed-method sampling technique (multi-stage and total enumeration) was adopted to sample the HRP of the identified agro-allied firms, as identified in Table 1.

According to Khalid [53], the total enumeration sampling technique is appropriate for quantitative research because it ensures data completeness and captures every member of the population.

They were selected because they represent significant hubs of agro-allied businesses in those states, with diversities in urban agribusiness, public-private partnerships, and connections between consumers, investors, farmers, and agro-allied producers. The agro-allied firms encompass a range of employment capacities within small and medium-scale enterprises, focusing on sustainability and data-driven agribusiness.

Khalid [53] made a case for the use of total enumeration, also known as a census survey. The study made a 10% provision for extra sample size to account for unreturned questionnaires, which enabled the study to achieve a 100% response rate. The project supervisor and three HRP validated the instrument for clarity and relevance before its administration. The reliability coefficient of the 39 tested items yielded 0.74 using Cronbach's alpha. This aligns with Kennedy [54], which indicates that an instrument is reliable if the coefficient can be approximated to 1. A pilot test with two HRP was conducted to adjust complex questions and confirm readability. Two research assistants were trained in the effective administration of the instrument, and the data administration period lasted two months. The questionnaire was structured into three sections (section A is the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while sections B and C are for the two research objectives). The questionnaire is built on a five-point Likert scale (Neutral = 1, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 3, Agree = 4, and Strongly Agree = 5).

The primary data (questionnaire) collected were analyzed descriptively using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 23. The statistical method adopted is the best for collecting numerical data from the respondents.

4. Results

In Table 2, a majority (53.5%) of the respondents are female, while the male colleagues accounted for 46.5%. This suggests that females dominate the HRP, which justifies the popular notion that women are calmer and softer in their vocals and have more beautiful

smiles. These alone are enough to put many applicants on the fence about whether they will be employed or not, since their verbal and non-verbal actions are often unpredictable. Hence, a more accurate reflection of the result is obtained from such a gender.

The percentage of the respondents' age range are 37.4%, 33.3%, 24.2%, and 5.1% correspond to the following age ranges: 26–32 years, 19–25 years, 33–39 years, and 40 years and above, respectively. This indicates that a higher percentage of respondents are between 26 and 32 years old. As such, they are viable, energetic, and versatile in their daily engagement as HRPs. Thus, tasks will be delivered more quickly. Maturity will be applied in internal and external engagements. The HRP will display boldness and high courage due to their marriageable age.

Most of the respondents (79.8%) are faithful Christians. The remaining 20.2% belong to Islamic believers. This suggests that the Christian faithful dominate this circle in the selected states. As such, they stand to exhibit patience, love, and kindness, which are all virtues of Jesus Christ. This will help in the recruitment of the best candidates for jobs, in combination with other criteria. Overall, peace and progress are assured in the establishments.

The educational qualifications of the respondents are the following: BSc and equivalent (69.7%), MSc and equivalent (11.1%), HND (10.1%), PhD (5.1%), and no response (4.0%). This shows the respondents' level of educational attainment. Based on this, the HRPs are well-educated and exposed and can distinguish between right and wrong. Thus, they can make the best-informed decisions for their various establishments. This will assist them in avoiding the prevalent mistakes that HRP used to make by calling for a little more than what they need, rather than a city. This will also help establish and build a social network, ensuring a broader customer base and fostering good industry relationships, as well as hiring the necessary candidates for jobs based on digital skills and social and emotional intelligence.

A more significant percentage (45.5%) of the respondents graduated between 2014 and 2017, followed by 25.3% between 2018 and 2021, 15.2% between 2010 and 2013, 11.1% before 2010, and 3.0% who declined their submission. This indicates that the HRPs are current breeds from the present decade that are familiar with the demands of contemporary jobs. Additionally, it suggests that they are aware of the employer's demands in the recruitment process for the agricultural sector, which employs over 70 million Nigerians. This means that they will be able to effectively match applicants' competencies with the contemporary demands of employers. Thus, the best candidates are recruited, and good results are achieved.

Table 2
Socio-demographic characteristics

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender:		
	Male	46	46.5
	Female	53	53.5
	Total	99	100
2	Age:		
	19–25 years	33	33.3
	26–32 years	37	37.4
	33–39 years	24	24.2
	40 years and above	5	5.1
	Total	99	100
3	Religion:		
	Christianity	79	79.8
	Islam	20	20.2
	Others	-	-
	Total	99	100
4	Educational Qualification:		
	HND	10	10.1
	BSc and equivalent	69	69.7
	MSc and equivalent	11	11.1
	PhD	5	5.1
	No response	4	4.0
	Total	99	100
5	First Degree Year of Graduation:		
	< 2010	11	11.1
	2010–2013	15	15.2
	2014–2017	45	45.5
	2018–2021	25	25.3
	No response	3	3.0
	Total	99	100
6	Years of Experience as HRP:		
	< 1 year	27	27.3
	1–5	41	41.4
	6–10	16	16.2
	> 11	-	-
	No response	15	15.2
	Total	99	100
7	Social Status:		
	Low	7	7.1
	Moderate	71	71.7
	Classic	21	21.2
	Total	99	100

The respondents opined on their years of experience as HRP in this descending order (41.4%), (27.3%), and (16.2%) with the following 1–5, <1, and 6–10 corresponding years. (15.2%) declined response. This means that the respondents have on-the-job experience. Over time, they have been able to adapt to the shift in job demands and the skills acquired by employees or applicants. Thus, they are in the best position to develop the skills needed to build relationships and navigate the era of disruptive innovation in the job.

In the open-ended part of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, it is reported that the respondents specified their course of study as human resource management, agricultural economics, industrial relations and personnel management, banking and finance, botany, agricultural extension and rural development, fisheries and agriculture, international relations and human

resources management agriculture, crop production and protection, accounting, business administration, English studies, office and information management, economics, communication arts, environmental management, agricultural technology, animal science, industrial relations, and human resources management. The reason for the variances in the course of study is that most agro-allied-based firms prefer to hire an employee who will be trained in human resources and will function in other relevant sections. Additionally, all administrative staff members are considered HRP in public establishments.

University/Polytechnic Attended: Please specify: Elizade University, Bayero University, Lautech, LASU, FUOYE, OAU, Kogi State University, Bowen, Unilag, Estam University, Benin Republic, Abuad, Covenant University, and Joseph Ayo Babalola University.

Table 3
Implications of social intelligence quotient as a soft skill on Nigerian graduates' employability

S/N	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
8	Human resource personnel tend to place a higher value on academic certificates than on social intelligence during the recruitment stage:		
	Neutral	11	11.1
	Disagree	17	17.2
	Strongly Disagree	6	6.1
	Agree	54	54.5
	Strongly Agree	11	11.1
	Total	99	100
9	Possession of higher social intelligence does not necessarily increase an employee's earnings:		
	Neutral	10	10.1
	Disagree	30	30.3
	Strongly Disagree	14	14.1
	Agree	30	30.3
	Strongly Agree	15	15.2
	Total	99	100
10	Human resource personnel do not consider social intelligence during the recruitment process:		
	Neutral	10	10.1
	Disagree	38	38.4
	Strongly Disagree	17	17.2
	Agree	25	25.3
	Strongly Agree	9	9.1
	Total	99	100
11	There is a consideration for social intelligence before an employee can be promoted:		
	Neutral	7	7.1
	Disagree	11	11.1
	Strongly Disagree	8	8.1
	Agree	63	63.6
	Strongly Agree	9	9.1
	No Response	1	1.0
	Total	99	100
12	An employee can be promoted to a senior management cadre without consideration for social intelligence:		
	Neutral	13	13.1
	Disagree	26	26.3
	Strongly Disagree	16	16.2
	Agree	40	40.4
	Strongly Agree	4	4.0
	Total	99	100
13	A relationship exists between the staff's social identity as a social species and social intelligence:		
	Neutral	13	13.1
	Disagree	5	5.1
	Strongly Disagree	6	6.1
	Agree	58	58.6
	Strongly Agree	16	16.2
	No Response	1	1.0
	Total	99	100
14	The recruited employee can navigate social situations through social intelligence:		
	Neutral	9	9.1
	Disagree	6	6.1
	Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
	Agree	61	61.6
	Strongly Agree	19	19.2
	Total	99	100

(Continued)

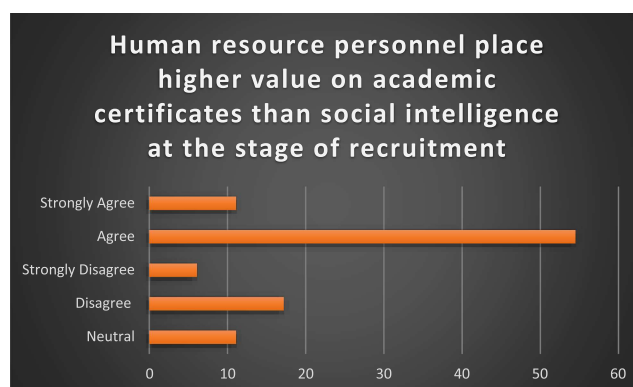
Table 3
(Continued)

S/N	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
15	Workers' social intelligence does not enable them to build a robust relationship with colleagues:		
	Neutral	7	7.1
	Disagree	39	39.4
	Strongly Disagree	33	33.3
	Agree	17	17.2
	Strongly Agree	3	3.0
	Total	99	100
16	The possession of social intelligence does not have a favorable implication on personal well-being:		
	Neutral	11	11.1
	Disagree	32	32.3
	Strongly Disagree	24	24.2
	Agree	26	26.3
	Strongly Agree	4	4.0
	No Response	2	2.0
	Total	99	100
17	The collective possession of social intelligence does not lead to economic success:		
	Neutral	11	11.1
	Disagree	28	28.3
	Strongly Disagree	23	23.2
	Agree	35	35.4
	Strongly Agree	2	2.0
	Total	99	100
18	An employee's social intelligence cannot predict co-workers' subsequent behavior based on previous knowledge:		
	Neutral	13	13.1
	Disagree	24	24.2
	Strongly Disagree	9	9.1
	Agree	37	37.4
	Strongly Agree	16	16.2
	Total	99	100

Regarding the social status of the respondents, a majority (71.7%) reported a moderate status, followed by the classic (21.2%), and the low (7.1%). This means that the social status of the HRP is integral to the decision-making process that employs contemporary, skill-filled applicants for successful applications. Thus, the HRP will be able to assess the social sensitivity and suitability of the applicants for the job specifications. Also, there will be a blend and match of the employees' social status and acquired skills. As such, more significant input and output in the production processes or delivery are ascertained.

Table 3 above represents the first research objective (to ascertain the implication of the SI quotient as an SS on Nigerian graduate employability). The respondents partially agree (54.5%) that HRP place a higher value on academic certificates than SI during the recruitment stage, rarely disagree (17.2%), and are either firmly agree or neutral (11.1%). In comparison, a small percentage disagree entirely (6.1%). This means that academic certificates are prioritized over SI in the recruitment processes of agro-allied firms. It implies that the abilities and skills required for contemporary jobs have been neglected in the process; as such, the inability to cope with social arrangements, interactions, engagement, and maintaining relationships will become the norm on the job. In both the short and long term, the firms will bear the costs of training and

Figure 2
Academic certificates in social intelligence



retraining the affected staff. Also, sacking is imminent when the firms cannot bear such a burden. Loss of means of living, reduction in the standard of living, increased unemployment, and social vices will characterize such an environment. This narration is complemented by Figure 2. The inquiries of Mehtap and Savci et al. [9, 10]

negate these findings. Furthermore, the consensus theory of Selvadurai [50] stated that training is an investment in human capital that could enhance employability (job seeking and maintenance).

Possession of higher SI does not necessarily increase an employee's earnings. The respondents with the following percentages (30.3%, 15.2%, 14.1% and 10.1%) submitted to the immediate statement with the following corresponding Likert scales: sparingly agreed and incompletely disagreed, strongly agreed, completely disagreed, and undecided, respectively. This reveals that the ability to navigate social settings and maintain relationships tends to increase staff earnings. Extra work, referral, and sudden promotion are attributes of such SI. Hence, only employees who can build and maintain relationships at the workplace will earn more than those who lack these built, cultivated, and maintained traits. The investigation of Mehtap and Savci et al. [9, 10] is in tandem with these results. In line with the attribution theory [48, 49], the earnings increase is due to internal factors.

Regarding the statement that there is no consideration for SI competencies during recruitment processes, 38.4% of the respondents relatively disagree, 25.3% slightly agree, 17.2% wholly disagree, 10.1% absolutely agree, and 9.1% are indifferent. The results reveal that HRP have no shot at maintaining social relations during recruitment. Thus, double work (training and retraining) and working in isolation are envisioned, which hurts the agro-allied firms' timeliness, finances, and task delivery. Hence, they may lose customers to competitors and become less relevant in the industry over time. Lau [8] objected to these findings.

A larger percentage (63.6%) of the respondents partially agree that SI is considered before an employee can be promoted; in contrast, 11.1% scarcely disagreed, 9.1% absolutely agreed, 8.1% wholly disagreed, 7.1% stayed on the fence, and 1.0% gave no response. This means that the management of agro-based companies has recognized the importance of SI in building a broad customer base and maintaining harmonious relationships both internally and externally. This can lead to more referrals, contracts, sales, advertisements, and connections needed to stay afloat in the competitive market and maintain industry relevance. Lau's [8] investigation corroborated these results.

Regarding the statement that an employee can be promoted to a senior management cadre without consideration for SI, 40.4% partially agreed, 26.3% relatively disagreed, 16.2% firmly disagreed, 13.1% were undecided, and 4.0% significantly agreed. This means that staff members can be promoted to the management cadre without considering their SI. Considering the sensitivity of managerial positions both internally and externally, companies' image, profit-making, and competitive advantage, these companies cannot afford to go too far. They will be limited in scope and growth. Thus, their corporate goals and primary objectives might be defeated. The inquiry of Lau [8] was not on the same page as these findings.

Most (58.6%) respondents agree that a relationship exists between staff's social identity as a social species and SI. Additionally, 16.2% wholly agreed, 13.1% were undecided, 6.1% entirely disagreed, 5.1% moderately disagreed with the statement, and 1.0% had no response. The result reveals that human beings, as a social species, have a relationship that defines their ability to navigate through social engagements and build and maintain social relationships. Since all humans are social species, it is evident that social species can effectively relate to and build cordial relationships with one another, which is tantamount to SI and social well-being. Thus, on a human level, Nigerian graduates can relate to other species, leading to an overall increase in the employability rate in the country. This aligns with the view of [8].

On the statement that the recruited employee can navigate social situations through SI, 61.6% partially agreed, 19.2% fully

agreed, 9.1% were neutral, 6.1% moderately disagreed, and 4.0% entirely disagreed. This means that before gaining knowledge and possessing SI, they found it easy to navigate and explore events, tasks, and other social engagements within and outside agro-based establishments. The implication is that the social network of Nigerian graduates and agro-allied firms has increased, leading to enhanced working relationships and problem-solving. Lau [8] shared the same view as these findings.

For the statement "Workers' social intelligence does not enable them to build a robust relationship with colleagues," 39.4% incompletely disagreed, 33.3% profoundly disagreed, 17.2% relatively agreed, 7.1% stood still, and 3.0% strongly agreed. It reveals a connection between Nigerian graduates' ability to build relationships and their ability to maintain them. It implies that speedy work will be achieved, progress will occur, and positivism will prevail, thereby causing a robust and sound relationship beyond the chores of working hours. The research of Lau (2016) is in agreement with these findings.

On the statement that possessing SI does not positively affect personal well-being, 32.3% of the respondents rarely disagreed, 26.3% partially agreed, 24.2% entirely disagreed, 11.1% were neutral, 4.0% completely agreed, and 2.0% had no response. The results indicate a favorable implication of SI on the personal well-being of Nigerian graduates. As such, good health and a sound mind are products of SI that contribute to personal well-being. Hence, there is an overall personal wholeness. There is oneness in the inquiry of Lau [8] and this revelation.

On the statement that the collective possession of SI does not lead to economic success, 35.4% moderately agreed, 28.3% sparingly disagreed, 23.2% comprehensively disagreed, 11.1% were indifferent, and 2.0% wholly agreed. The results reveal that aggregate individual SI can lead to economic success. This is synonymous with the popular notion that "a drop of water makes an ocean." The benefits derived individually from possessing SI have led to economic thriving and success. Thus, the economic prosperity of the agro-allied firms is guaranteed. These findings align with the efforts of Lau [8].

Lastly, on the statement "Employee's social intelligence cannot predict co-workers' next behavior based on previous knowledge," 37.4% wholly agreed, 24.2% partially disagreed, 16.2% strongly agreed, 13.1% were neutral, and 9.1% completely disagreed. This means that Nigerian graduates cannot predict the subsequent behavior of colleagues who possess SI. This is contrary to the empirical findings of Lau [8].

Table 4 discusses the consequences of the EI quotient on Nigerian graduates' employability.

EI has been regarded as an essential SS that job seekers need to secure a job successfully. The respondents opined in the following order: 44.4%, 28.3%, 12.1%, 10.1%, and 5.1%, respectively, moderately agree, wholly agree, firmly disagree, rarely disagree, and stay on the fence. This means that before Nigerian graduates can successfully secure a job, the HRP considers the applicants' emotional intelligence. The test of emotional intelligence as a soft skill (the ability to control oneself from disappointment) has given them an added advantage, culminating in monthly earnings and active engagement. This leads to a secure society that is free from idleness. This effort aligns with the work of Almeida and Morais [3, 4].

A more significant percentage (58.6%) of the respondents agree that recruiters consider EI an essential SS Nigerian graduates need to excel on the job, with additional respondents who firmly agree (21.2%), profoundly disagree (11.1%), relatively disagree (5.1%), and are indifferent (4.0%). This suggests that Nigerian graduates require EI to excel in their jobs. This has been assisting Nigerian graduates in managing the emotions of anger, sadness,

Table 4
Consequences of emotional intelligence quotient as a soft skill on Nigerian graduates' employability

S/N	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
19	Emotional intelligence has been regarded as an essential soft skill needed by job seekers to secure a job successfully:		
	Neutral	5	5.1
	Disagree	10	10.1
	Strongly Disagree	12	12.1
	Agree	44	44.4
	Strongly Agree	28	28.3
	Total	99	100
20	Recruiters considered emotional intelligence as an essential soft skill needed by Nigerian graduates to excel on the job:		
	Neutral	4	4.0
	Disagree	5	5.1
	Strongly Disagree	11	11.1
	Agree	58	58.6
	Strongly Agree	21	21.2
	Total	99	100
21	Emotional intelligence as a significant soft skill guarantees that a complete human being can achieve happiness:		
	Neutral	3	3.0
	Disagree	13	13.1
	Strongly Disagree	10	10.1
	Agree	60	60.6
	Strongly Agree	13	13.1
	Total	99	100
22	Competencies of emotional intelligence aid the development of Nigerian graduates' cognitive processes:		
	Neutral	16	16.2
	Disagree	4	4.0
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.0
	Agree	60	60.6
	Strongly Agree	16	16.2
	No Response	1	1.0
	Total	99	100
23	Possession of emotional intelligence can strategically help to attain the goals of Nigerian graduates:		
	Neutral	9	9.1
	Disagree	4	4.0
	Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
	Agree	73	73.7
	Strongly Agree	9	9.1
	Total	99	100
24	The social influence of emotional intelligence has a reflection in the decision-making processes of Nigerian graduates:		
	Neutral	6	16.2
	Disagree	4	4.0
	Strongly Disagree	3	3.0
	Agree	61	61.6
	Strongly Agree	15	15.2
	Total	99	100
25	Social awareness as an element of emotional intelligence enhances the problem-solving skills of Nigerian graduates:		
	Neutral	16	16.2
	Disagree	2	2.0
	Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
	Agree	66	66.7
	Strongly Agree	11	11.1
	Total	99	100

(Continued)

Table 4
(Continued)

S/N	Statement	Frequency	Percentage
26	Workers with higher emotional intelligence can generate a mood that allows them to do better on complex tasks on and off the job:		
	Neutral	12	12.1
	Disagree	4	4.0
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.0
	Agree	51	51.5
	Strongly Agree	31	31.3
	Total	99	100
27	Emotional intelligence assists Nigerian graduates in effectively managing aggression, rudeness, and irresponsible behavior:		
	Neutral	1	1.0
	Disagree	4	4.0
	Strongly Disagree	7	7.1
	Agree	53	53.5
	Strongly Agree	34	34.3
	Total	99	100

happiness, fear, confusion, disgust, relief, disappointment, shame, guilt, and shyness that arise. Thus, the bad moods will not deter them from doing their best. Hence, tasks are delivered promptly. Effective emotional management can attract more customers or investors. The inquiries of Tamsah, as well as those of Almeida and Morais [3, 4], agree with these findings.

Furthermore, 60.6% of the respondents moderately agree that EI is a significant SS that enables a complete human being to achieve happiness. Additionally, 13.1% strongly agree, 13.1% partially disagree, 10.1% entirely disagree, and 3.0% are neutral. The result means that human happiness is a function of emotional intelligence, that is, the ability to maintain and control an individual's and collective emotions at a given time. Thus, a good and happy person will be diligent and dedicated to their work, leading to the optimal result. On a personal level, it will help Nigerian graduates achieve self-fulfillment – satisfied and actualized, as they are happy on all fronts. The research of Polakov et al. and Emanuel et al. [27, 28] supports this finding.

The competencies of EI facilitate the development of Nigerian graduates' cognitive processes. 60.6%, 16.2%, 16.2%, 4.0%, 2.0%, and 1.0% incompletely agree, firmly agree, undecided, partially disagree, profoundly disagree, and no response, respectively, to the statement. It is concluded that possessing EI competence aids the development of Nigerian graduates' cognitive processes. As such, this will enable them to think critically and creatively, leading to the commercialization of opportunities. It will help Nigerian graduates stay focused, maintain clarity of purpose, and enhance their mental stability. There is harmony between these findings and the efforts of Checa and Fernández-Berrocal [11].

Most (73.7%) of the respondents agree that possessing EI can help Nigerian graduates achieve their goals strategically. Wholly agree and neutral have (9.1%) each, and the disagree divisions have (4.0%) each. It implies that for Nigerian graduates to achieve their goals, possessing emotional intelligence is key strategically. Since cognitive development is in play, mental stability, staying focused, and creative thinking will lead to attaining the Nigerian graduates' narrow and broader goals. Thus, better graduates are being produced. There is an accord between the current findings and the study of Pritamani [34].

The social influence of EI is reflected in the decision-making processes of Nigerian graduates. The respondents submitted the following percentages: 61.6%, 16.2%, 15.2%, 4.0%, and 3.0%, and the corresponding Likert scales were rarely agree, neutral,

completely agree, sparingly disagree, and entirely disagree, respectively. It means there is a nexus between the decision-making process of Nigerian graduates and emotional intelligence, influenced by social effects. Thus, the control and management of moods have facilitated better decision-making and significantly contributed to the strategic and informed decisions made through EI. There is an understanding between these results and the findings of Ivcevic and Green [35].

A majority (66.7%) of the respondents agree that social awareness as an element of EI enhances the problem-solving skills of Nigerian graduates. Additionally, 16.2% are neutral, 11.1% firmly agree, 4.0% hugely disagree, and 2.0% incompletely disagree with the statement. This means that social awareness as an element of EI enhances the problem-solving skills of Nigerian graduates. The information at the disposal of the Nigerian graduates, based on control and management of moods, has enabled them to solve problems through an understanding of others. As such, they can cope with and overcome any difficulties they face. Thus, they become better humans who will not run from problems but deploy their bits of intelligence to address them. This narrative is complemented by Figure 3. A unison exists between Ivcevic, as well as Green and Webb [35, 55], and the findings of this study.

Figure 3
Emotional intelligence enhances problem-solving skills

Social awareness as an element of emotional intelligence enhances the problem-solving skills of Nigerian graduates



■ Neutral ■ Disagree
■ Strongly Disagree ■ Agree
■ Strongly Agree

Most (51.5%) of the respondents rarely agree that workers with higher emotional intelligence can generate a mood that enables them to perform better on complex tasks both on and off the job (31.3%) of the respondents firmly agree, 12.1% are undecided, (4.0%) partially disagree and 1.0% completely disagree. This means that Nigerian graduates with emotional intelligence can perform better on and off the job by maintaining the right mood. Thus, they become the better version of themselves and produce results at the maximum level. Additionally, this will enable them to maintain a happy mood and cope more easily with other life issues. An alliance exists between this revelation and the findings (Ivcevic & Green, 2023; Webb et al., 2014).

Of the respondents, 53.5%, 34.3%, 7.1%, 4.0%, and 1.0%, respectively, incompletely agree, deeply agree, hugely disagree, sparingly disagree, and stay neutral, that EI assists Nigerian graduates in effectively managing aggression, rudeness, and irresponsible behavior. This means Nigerian graduates can effectively manage aggression, rudeness, and irresponsible behavior due to their EI. Thus, it will enable them to live in peace with all men, display a noble character, and act honorably in the face of aggression. The overall peaceful society is ascertained. There is an affinity between this result and the findings of the authors [35, 39].

H1: There is no statistical significance between the predictors (social status, gender, economic status, and experience) of the HRP and the ability of the recruited employees (Nigerian graduates) to navigate social situations through SI.

H₀₁: There is no statistical significance between the predictors (social status, gender, economic status, and experience) of the HRP and the ability of the recruited employees (Nigerian graduates) to navigate social situations through SI.

Decision Rules:

R² and Adjusted R²: If adjusted R² is close to negative or zero, the model has poor explanatory power.

ANOVA (F-test): If $p > 0.05$, the model is not statistically significant.

Predictor's Statistical Significance (p-value): If $p < 0.05$, the predictor is significant; otherwise, it is not.

Confidence Intervals (95% CI): The effect is not statistically significant if the CI includes zero.

Effect Size (Standardized Beta, $|\beta|$): $|\beta| < 0.1$: Trivial; $0.1 \leq |\beta| < 0.3$: Small; $|\beta| \geq 0.3$: Meaningful

Multicollinearity (VIF and Tolerance): VIF > 5 or Tolerance < 0.2 indicates multicollinearity.

Autocorrelation (Durbin–Watson): DW $\approx$ 2: No autocorrelation. DW < 1 or > 3: Potential autocorrelation.

Discussion of the Results: The regression analyses in Tables 5 and 6 examined the relationship between several predictors (gender, economic status, social status, and years of experience as HRP) and the dependent variable, which measured employees' ability to navigate social situations through SI. The model demonstrated

Table 5
Testing of hypothesis

Model summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin–Watson
1	0.187 ^a	0.035	−0.006	1.120	1.571

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Economic Status, Year of Experience as HRP, Social Status

b. Dependent Variable: The recruited employee can navigate social situations through social intelligence

Table 6
Regression analysis

Coefficients ^a											
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B			Correlations		Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance VIF
(Constant)	3.753	0.727		5.164	0.000	2.310	5.196				
Social Status	0.179	0.265	0.083	0.677	0.500	−0.346	0.704	0.042	0.070	0.069	0.689 1.451
Economic Status	−0.351	0.299	−0.144	−1.175	0.243	−0.943	0.242	−0.052	−0.120	−0.119	0.679 1.473
Years of Experience as HRP	0.139	0.095	0.162	1.457	0.148	−0.050	0.327	0.142	0.149	0.148	0.835 1.198
Gender	0.040	0.236	0.018	0.170	0.865	−0.429	0.509	0.052	0.018	0.017	0.912 1.097

Note: a. Dependent Variable: The recruited employee can navigate social situations through social intelligence

very weak explanatory power, with an R^2 of 0.035 and an adjusted R^2 of -0.006, indicating that the predictors collectively accounted for almost no variance in the outcome. Furthermore, the ANOVA results revealed a non-significant F -statistic ($p = 0.496$), confirming that the model did not significantly predict the dependent variable. These findings suggest that the selected predictors are not significant in predicting SI navigation in this context.

The coefficients table provided additional insights, showing that none of the predictors had statistically significant effects ($p > 0.05$ for all). The standardized beta values were small (all $|\text{Beta}| < 0.2$), and each predictor's 95% confidence intervals included zero, reinforcing the lack of significance. While multicollinearity was not an issue (Tolerance > 0.2 , VIF < 5), the trivial effect sizes and wide confidence intervals further undermined the model's credibility. The Durbin-Watson statistic (1.571) suggested no autocorrelation, and the residuals were normally distributed; however, these technical adequacies did not compensate for the model's overall weakness.

Given these results, the analysis does not support the hypothesis that the examined predictors influence employees' navigation of SI. The findings highlight the importance of considering effect sizes and confidence intervals, in addition to p -values, when evaluating regression models. Therefore, the predictors (gender, economic status, social status, and years of experience as HRP) do not have a statistically significant effect on the ability of the recruited employees (Nigerian graduates) to navigate social situations through social intelligence.

5. Novelty of the Research

The novelty of this study lies in the popular notion that Nigerian graduates and human resources managers still hold onto academic certificates, as opposed to the literature that suggests a sporadic shift toward social and emotional intelligence. However, these empirical findings align with popular belief and negate the existing literature.

6. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The study concluded that agro-allied firms prioritize academic certificates over SI during recruitment, leading to potential skill mismatches, poor workplace relationships, and higher training costs. However, employees with strong SI tend to earn more through better networking and promotions. In contrast, individuals with high EI tend to exhibit superior job performance, effective stress management, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. Despite these benefits, many firms do not formally assess these skills, missing opportunities to enhance productivity and workplace harmony. Social and emotional intelligence collectively contribute to economic success by enhancing decision-making, fostering collaboration, and promoting long-term business sustainability. Graduates with well-developed EI and social skills adapt better to workplace challenges, manage conflicts effectively, and foster a positive work environment. These insights underscore the need for a paradigm shift in recruitment and workforce development strategies to balance academic qualifications with essential SSs.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that educational institutions integrate social and emotional intelligence training into their curricula, offering courses on interpersonal communication and conflict resolution, while partnering with industries to provide practical exposure. Employers must revise recruitment criteria to include EI and SI assessments, such as psychometric tests and behavioral interviews, while implementing continuous workplace training programs on teamwork and leadership. Promotion policies should also prioritize these competencies, especially for

managerial roles. Government and regulatory bodies can support this shift by developing national SSs certification programs through agencies like the Industrial Training Fund and National Youth Service Corps, funding research on the economic impact of SSs, and offering incentives such as tax breaks to firms that invest in EI and social skills training. These measures will ensure a more competent, adaptable, and productive workforce, driving individual career success and broader economic growth.

7. Practical Managerial Implications

This inquiry's practical and managerial implications are that managers should redesign recruitment processes to incorporate structured assessments of social and emotional intelligence (behavioral interviews, situational judgment tests, and traditional credentials). Organizations must also invest in continuous SSs development through mandatory training programs in emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and collaborative leadership, with periodic refreshers to reinforce these competencies. Additionally, performance metrics and promotion criteria should explicitly integrate social and emotional intelligence, particularly for leadership roles, to incentivize and reward these critical behaviors. Finally, human resource leaders should advocate for broader ecosystem support by collaborating with industry groups and policymakers to standardize SS certifications and secure incentives for firms investing in such training.

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Ethical Statement

This study does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by the author.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest in this work.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Author Contribution Statement

Tomisin James Aruleba: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

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