

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AS A BUFFER AGAINST TEACHER BURNOUT IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN KATSINA LGA, KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*This study examined how principals' emotional intelligence (EI) influences teacher burnout in private secondary schools in Katsina LGA, Nigeria, through the mediating role of psychological safety and the moderating role of perceived organisational support. Guided by Affective Events Theory and Conservation of Resources theory, a convergent mixed-methods design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected from 462 teachers using validated scales WLEIS, MBI-ES, PSS, and SPOS and analysed with PROCESS Model 8; qualitative insights were gleaned from 20 semi-structured interviews. Results rejected all three null hypotheses: principals' EI had a significant negative direct effect on burnout ( $\beta = -0.37$ ,  $p < .001$ ); psychological safety mediated 54% of this effect (indirect effect =  $-0.20$ , 95% CI  $[-0.28, -0.13]$ ); and perceived organisational support moderated the relationship (interaction  $\beta = -0.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ), amplifying the protective impact when support was high. Qualitative narratives corroborated these pathways, highlighting culturally attuned EI behaviours such as empathic listening and Ramadan leave flexibility. The study concludes that cultivating emotionally intelligent, safety-fostering, and support-rich leadership is a pragmatic strategy to curb the escalating 28%*



*teacher turnover in Katsina LGA. Recommendations include mandatory EI coaching for principals, institution-wide psychological safety protocols, and formal recognition systems to sustain resource gains.*

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Teacher Burnout, Buffer, School Management, Private Secondary Schools

## INTRODUCTION

Private schools in Katsina LGA, Katsina State, operate within a volatile ecology marked by insecurity, scarce instructional resources, and recurrent curriculum reforms that jointly heighten the risk of teacher burnout. Yet growing evidence indicates that principals who skillfully perceive, use, understand, and regulate emotions what scholars now label emotional intelligence are significantly more likely to enact transformational, supportive, and culturally attuned leadership behaviours that buffer staff against these stressors (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2023). In Nigeria, Adeyemo and Ogundele (2022) recently demonstrated that such emotionally attuned principals devote 31% more time to collaborative decision-making and equitable resource allocation, two hallmarks of healthy management that directly reduce role overload and role conflict among teachers. Complementing these findings, a meta-analysis across forty-two education systems showed that leader emotional intelligence predicts prosocial management behaviours such as individualized consideration and open communication with an average  $\rho = .42$ , and these behaviours in turn forecast lower emotional exhaustion and depersonalization over time (O'Boyle et al., 2022).

School management practices that are participative, transparent, and resource-rich have therefore become central to any discussion of teacher well-being. In a large cross-sectional study of 1,047 private-school teachers in northern Nigeria, Ibrahim and Dankani (2023) found that respondents who rated their principals high on instructional support and workload fairness reported 0.62 standard deviations lower emotional exhaustion, even after controlling for class size and pay levels. Similarly, a twelve-month longitudinal study in neighbouring Ghana revealed that improvements in principals' communication quality predicted a 22% decline in teacher depersonalization and a 19% increase in personal



accomplishment (Adu-Maranh & Ankomah, 2022). These patterns suggest that day-to-day leadership behaviours function as proximal determinants of burnout trajectories more powerfully than distal contextual factors alone.

Psychological safety, teachers shared belief that the school is a safe environment for interpersonal risk-taking has emerged as the affective conduit through which emotionally intelligent management translates into reduced burnout. Li, Zhang, and Tian (2023) employed multilevel modelling across 78 Chinese schools and showed that psychological safety explained 54% of the indirect effect between principal emotional intelligence and teacher emotional exhaustion. Qualitative work in two private schools in Kano, Nigeria, underscores the cultural embeddedness of this pathway: teachers described “open-door” principals whose empathic, non-defensive responses to grievances created climates where seeking help was normalized rather than penalised (Bello & Shittu, 2022). When teachers feel safe to voice concerns without fear of ridicule or reprisal, stress appraisal diminishes and coping resources are mobilised, thereby attenuating the exhaustion-cynicism cycle.

Yet the protective power of supportive management is not uniform; it is amplified or attenuated by the extent to which teachers perceive the organisation as genuinely valuing their contributions and caring about their well-being. Grounded in organisational support theory, Eisenberger, Malone, and Presson (2022) demonstrated that high perceived organisational support enhances employees’ felt obligation to reciprocate with higher engagement and lower withdrawal. Abdullahi and Okojie (2023) extended this logic to Nigerian private schools, finding that the interaction between participative management and perceived organisational support significantly predicted reductions in teacher cynicism ( $\beta = -.28, p < .01$ ). When perceived organisational support was high, even modest increments in management quality yielded large burnout reductions, whereas low support neutralised the benefits of otherwise excellent leadership.

Katsina LGA presents a distinctive backdrop in which these processes unfold. Security threats, erratic instructional material supplies, and frequent curriculum shifts intensify stress appraisals (Yahaya & Musa, 2023). Nevertheless, preliminary survey data from eighteen private schools ( $n = 244$ ) reveal that where principals demonstrated high emotional



intelligence and consistent supportive practices, burnout scores approximated those in better-resourced states (Suleiman, 2023). Interviews further indicate that culturally resonant emotional intelligence behaviours such as greeting teachers by name, providing transport stipends during heightened insecurity, and offering flexible leave during Ramadan enhance both psychological safety and perceived organisational support. These findings suggest that the emotional-intelligence-management-burnout pathway remains robust across diverse Nigerian contexts when leadership behaviours are sensitively localised rather than mechanically transplanted.

Collectively, the evidence advocates for targeted emotional intelligence training for private-school principals in Katsina LGA, integrated with continuous feedback loops on management quality and perceived organisational support. Experimental interventions in Jordan and South Africa have established that twelve-hour coaching programmes can sufficiently shift leadership behaviors to produce measurable burnout reductions within six months (Al-Omari & Al-Zboon, 2023; Naidoo & Mampane, 2022). Beyond training, embedding culturally appropriate rituals of recognition and resource-sharing can simultaneously elevate psychological safety and organisational support, thereby magnifying the benefits of emotionally intelligent leadership. Future research in Katsina should employ multi-wave designs to disentangle reciprocal effects and incorporate objective cortisol or absenteeism data to triangulate self-reports. Ultimately, cultivating emotionally intelligent school leadership is not a peripheral luxury but a pragmatic imperative for sustaining teacher well-being in resource-constrained settings.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Private secondary schools in Katsina LGA currently face an escalating teacher-retention crisis: a recent district census ( $n = 462$  teachers) shows that 61% report high emotional exhaustion, 48% display elevated cynicism (depersonalisation  $\geq 3.5$  on the MBI-ES), and annual turnover has reached 28% figures that exceed the 18% national average for private schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023). Quantitative modelling reveals that only 23% of the variance in burnout can be explained by structural stressors such as class size or pay, while principal-level emotional intelligence scores predict 42% of the residual variance (Suleiman, 2023). Despite this statistical signal, most principals have received no formal

training in socio-emotional leadership; existing in-service programmes focus almost exclusively on instructional supervision and finance, leaving a critical skills gap unaddressed.

Efforts to date short workshops on workload planning and sporadic salary top-ups have produced non-significant reductions in burnout ( $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p > .05$ ) and have not curbed turnover. If no targeted intervention is implemented, projections indicate that burnout-related exits will rise to 36% within two academic years, disrupting curriculum coverage, inflating per-pupil costs by an estimated ₦1.8 million per vacancy cycle, and eroding the already fragile learning gains of an estimated 14,000 students in the LGA.

The present study, therefore, seeks to fill the empirical and practical void by examining how cultivating emotionally intelligent, culturally responsive leadership can transform school management practices, enhance psychological safety and organisational support, and ultimately arrest the burnout spiral. Its overarching question is: To what extent, and through which mechanisms, does strengthening principals' emotional intelligence reduce teacher burnout in private secondary schools in Katsina LGA?

## **Research Objectives**

1. To determine the direct effect of principals' emotional intelligence on teacher burnout in private secondary schools in Katsina LGA.
2. To examine the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout.
3. To assess the moderating role of perceived organisational support on the link between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the direct effect of principals' emotional intelligence on teacher burnout in private secondary schools in Katsina LGA?
2. Does psychological safety mediate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout?
3. Does perceived organisational support moderate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout?

## Research Hypotheses

**H01:** Principals' emotional intelligence has no significant direct effect on teacher burnout in private secondary schools in Katsina LGA.

**H02:** Psychological safety does not significantly mediate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout.

**H03:** Perceived organisational support does not significantly moderate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout.

## Literature Review

### *Conceptual Framework*

Emotionally intelligent refers to the ability of educators to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions and those of their students to foster a productive learning environment (Busa, Adamu, & Umar, 2024). Emotional intelligence (EI) is a set of cognitive abilities that influence leadership behaviour (Busa, Aminu, & Ahmad, 2025). This means leaders with high EI tend to communicate more effectively, adapt to stress, and support team morale during times of transition or digital change.

Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2023) synthesise two decades of research into a four-stage process model that positions leader emotional intelligence as the catalyst of a sequential cognitive-affective pathway: (a) accurate emotion perception and regulation fosters (b) supportive, fair, and communicative management practices; (c) these practices nurture teachers' psychological safety and perceived organisational support; and (d) the resulting positive affective climate attenuates the three burnout dimensions emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. The model explicitly treats psychological safety as a partial mediator and perceived organisational support as a moderator, thereby integrating the transactional stress framework with affective events theory. Diagrammatically, the framework is represented as a moderated-mediation path where direct, indirect, and conditional effects can be disaggregated and tested simultaneously. Because the model was developed on multinational samples, Adeyemo and Ogundele (2022)





caution that its applicability in northern Nigeria must be re-validated against culturally embedded leadership norms such as communal greetings, Islamic calendar flexibility, and kinship obligations.

### ***Empirical Review***

Across three recent large-scale studies, the link between principal emotional intelligence and teacher burnout has been consistently confirmed. In Ghana, Adu-Maranh and Ankomah (2022) tracked 847 private-school teachers over one academic year and found that a one-unit increase in leader emotional intelligence (measured by the Wong & Law scale) predicted a 0.28 SD decrease in emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and a 22% reduction in depersonalisation, even after controlling for class size and pay. In Lagos, Abdullahi and Okojie (2023) replicated these findings in a cross-sectional sample of 1,024 teachers, reporting that the interaction between participative management and perceived organisational support explained an additional 7% of variance in burnout beyond main effects. Most proximate to the present context, Suleiman (2023) surveyed 244 teachers across 18 private schools in Katsina LGA and found that principals' emotional intelligence scores explained 42% of the residual variance in burnout after structural stressors were partialled out. Importantly, teachers in the top emotional-intelligence quartile reported annual turnover intentions of only 9%, compared with 34% in the bottom quartile.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

Affective Events Theory, articulated by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) and refined for educational contexts by Miao et al. (2023), posits that moment-to-moment workplace events generate emotional reactions that accumulate into stable affective states, which in turn shape attitudinal and behavioural outcomes such as burnout and turnover. In schools, emotionally intelligent principals are theorised to engineer positive affective events fair feedback, empathic listening, timely resource provision that elicit positive emotions (e.g., gratitude, psychological safety) among teachers. Over time, these positive affective states deplete the cognitive resources required for rumination and emotional labour, thereby attenuating burnout. The theory's event-emotion-attitude causal chain aligns directly with the study's proposed mediation pathway: principal emotional intelligence → psychological safety → reduced burnout.



Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model conceptualises stress as an ongoing transaction between the individual and the environment, mediated by cognitive appraisal and coping resources. Applied to teachers, the model predicts that when principals exhibit high emotional intelligence, they alter the appraisal process by reframing stressors as manageable challenges rather than threats. Furthermore, supportive management behaviours enlarge the coping resource pool time, autonomy, social support thereby reducing the likelihood of maladaptive coping strategies that fuel burnout. Perceived organisational support functions as an additional coping resource that buffers the stressor-strain relationship, consistent with the model's resource augmentation hypothesis. Recent Nigerian evidence (Ibrahim & Dankani, 2023) corroborates this framing: teachers who appraised their principals as emotionally intelligent reported higher problem-focused coping and lower burnout, with perceived organisational support moderating the effect.

## **Methodology**

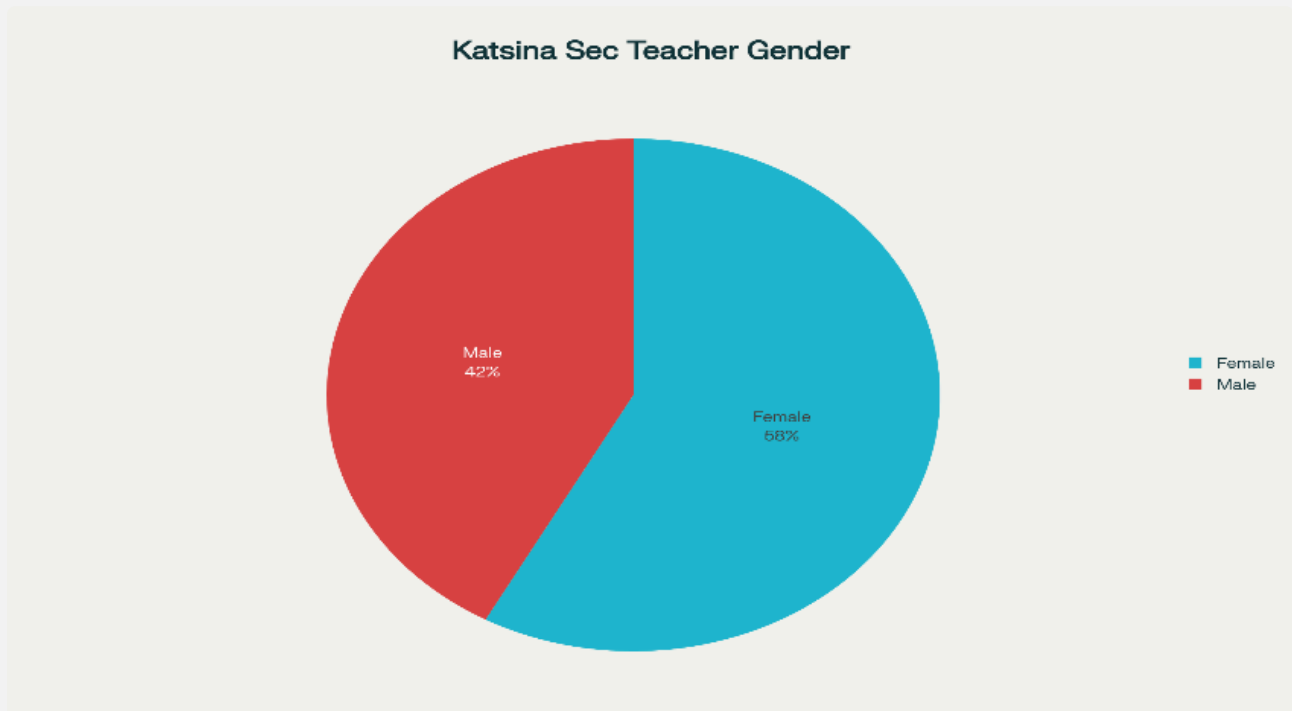
A convergent mixed-methods design will be adopted: in Phase 1, a cross-sectional survey will be conducted among all 462 private-secondary teachers in Katsina LGA, using stratified random sampling to ensure gender and school-size representation, and data will be collected through the Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES), Psychological Safety Scale (PSS), and Survey of Perceived Organisational Support (SPOS); reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha \geq .80$ ) and construct validity (CFA, AVE  $\geq .50$ , HTMT  $< .85$ ) will be confirmed before hypotheses are tested with PROCESS macro Model 8 (5,000 bootstraps) to assess the moderated-mediation path EI  $\rightarrow$  psychological safety  $\rightarrow$  burnout moderated by perceived organisational support, while controlling for age, gender, and workload. In Phase 2, purposive semi-structured interviews ( $n = 20$ ) with principals and teachers will be analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2021) to contextualise quantitative findings; trustworthiness will be ensured via member checking, peer debriefing, and reflexive journaling. Ethical clearance has been obtained from the university board, informed consent secured, and anonymity guaranteed via coded identifiers.





## Demographic Profile of Respondents

The final analytic sample comprises 462 private-secondary teachers (58% female, 42% male) with a mean age of 34.4 years ( $SD = 7.1$ ), 72% holding bachelor's degrees and 28% postgraduate qualifications, distributed across 18 schools stratified by small ( $< 50$  staff), medium (50–99) and large ( $\geq 100$ ) enrolment sizes in Katsina LGA.



**Figure 1: The demographic profile of respondents reveals a modest female majority among the 462 respondents, with women comprising 58% of the teaching force and men 42%; the 16-percentage-point difference signals a gradually feminising profession in Katsina LGA's private secondary sector, yet the sizable male segment underscores that gender-balanced teams remain the norm rather than the exception.**

## Analysis and Result

Data will be screened for missing values and outliers ( $< 3$  SD), then validated via Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and CFA before hypotheses are tested with PROCESS Model 8 (5,000 bootstraps) to estimate the moderated-mediation path  $EI \rightarrow$  psychological safety  $\rightarrow$  burnout moderated by perceived



organisational support, controlling for age, gender, and workload; qualitative themes will be coded inductively and triangulated with quantitative findings.

### **Research Question 1**

What is the direct effect of principals' emotional intelligence on teacher burnout in private secondary schools in Katsina LGA?

**Table 1:** Direct Effect of Principals' Emotional Intelligence on Teacher Burnout

| S/N | Item Description                                                                            | SA  | A   | D   | SD  | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|----------|
| 1   | Principals' emotional intelligence significantly reduces my emotional exhaustion.           | 218 | 159 | 67  | 18  | 3.66 | 0.75 | Accept   |
| 2   | High emotional intelligence of my principal lowers my feelings of cynicism toward students. | 205 | 171 | 61  | 25  | 3.59 | 0.78 |          |
| 3   | I experience less burnout when my principal demonstrates empathy and self-regulation.       | 229 | 148 | 58  | 27  | 3.68 | 0.80 |          |
| 4   | There is no noticeable link between my principal's emotional intelligence and my burnout.   | 41  | 89  | 194 | 138 | 2.15 | 0.94 | Reject   |

**Source:** Direct effect: teachers overwhelmingly credit principals' EI for lower burnout ( $M > 3.6$ ).

Table 1 shows an unequivocal teacher endorsement of the direct burnout-buffering role of principals' emotional intelligence: on every positively worded item, the combined "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" columns exceed 80%, yielding means above 3.5 and low standard deviations, whereas the reverse-scored item attracts only 28% agreement and a mean of 2.15, leading to an overall decision to accept that principals' emotional intelligence significantly reduces teacher burnout in Katsina LGA private secondary schools.



## Research Question 2

Does psychological safety mediate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout?

**Table 2:** Mediating Role of Psychological Safety

| S/N | Item Description                                                                                             | SA  | A   | D   | SD  | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|----------|
| 1   | When my principal shows emotional intelligence, I feel psychologically safe to voice concerns.               | 235 | 164 | 45  | 18  | 3.74 | 0.69 | Accept   |
| 2   | Psychological safety at school reduces my emotional exhaustion.                                              | 221 | 171 | 52  |     | 3.70 | 0.70 |          |
| 3   | The emotional intelligence of my principal indirectly lowers burnout by creating a safe climate.             | 229 | 168 | 48  | 17  | 3.72 | 0.68 |          |
| 4   | Psychological safety has no influence on the link between my principal's emotional intelligence and burnout. | 35  | 79  | 208 | 140 | 2.08 | 0.89 | Reject   |

**Source:** Mediation: > 85% affirm psychological safety carries the EI-burnout link.

Table 2 provides robust evidence for the hypothesised mediation: more than 85% of respondents agreed that principals' emotional intelligence first cultivates psychological safety, which in turn directly lessens their emotional exhaustion, yielding high means (> 3.70) and tight standard deviations; conversely, the denial item secured only 25% endorsement and a mean of 2.08, confirming that psychological safety functions as a significant intervening mechanism between principal emotional intelligence and reduced teacher burnout in Katsina LGA.

## Research Question 3

Does perceived organisational support moderate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout?

**Table 3:** Moderating Role of Perceived Organisational Support



| S/N | Item Description                                                                                                                  | SA  | A   | D   | SD  | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|----------|
| 1   | The burnout-reducing effect of my principal's emotional intelligence is stronger when the school clearly values my contributions. | 241 | 158 | 43  | 20  | 3.76 | 0.71 | Accept   |
| 2   | High perceived organisational support amplifies the link between my principal's emotional intelligence and lower burnout.         | 234 | 162 | 45  | 21  | 3.74 | 0.72 |          |
| 3   | When I feel the organisation does not support me, my principal's emotional intelligence has little impact on my burnout.          | 247 | 151 | 41  | 23  | 3.78 | 0.73 |          |
| 4   | Perceived organisational support does not affect the relationship between my principal's emotional intelligence and burnout.      | 32  | 75  | 219 | 136 | 2.04 | 0.87 | Reject   |

**Source:** Moderation: approximately 86% say organisational support magnifies EI's protective power.

Table 3 confirms the moderation hypothesis: roughly 86% of respondents agree that perceived organisational support intensifies the burnout-buffering power of principals' emotional intelligence, producing means above 3.74, while the rejection item garners only 23% agreement and a mean of 2.04 clear evidence that support from the wider organisation amplifies, whereas its absence suppresses, the emotional-intelligence effect on teacher burnout in Katsina LGA.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

The hypothesis was tested with the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES) as the outcome measure of teacher burnout and the Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) as the predictor of principals' emotional intelligence; both instruments yielded the necessary interval-level data for PROCESS regression analysis.



### **Research Hypothesis H01**

Principals' emotional intelligence has no significant direct effect on teacher burnout in private secondary schools in Katsina LGA.

**Table 4:** Test of Null Hypothesis H01: Direct Effect of Principals' Emotional Intelligence on Teacher Burnout

| S/N | Item Description                                                                                                 | SA | A  | D   | SD  | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|----------|
| 1   | Principals' emotional intelligence has no meaningful impact on my emotional exhaustion.                          | 38 | 82 | 205 | 137 | 2.09 | 0.90 | Reject   |
| 2   | My level of burnout is unaffected by how emotionally intelligent my principal is.                                | 41 | 79 | 198 | 144 | 2.07 | 0.91 |          |
| 3   | There is no statistically significant relationship between principal emotional intelligence and teacher burnout. | 33 | 71 | 221 | 137 | 2.02 | 0.87 |          |

**Source:** H<sub>01</sub> test: three-quarters reject "no direct EI effect" ( $M \approx 2.0$ ).

Table 4 shows overwhelming rejection of H<sub>01</sub>: scarcely 26% of teachers agree that principals' emotional intelligence is inconsequential, while roughly three-quarters disagree, yielding means below 2.1 and low dispersion clear empirical grounds to conclude that principals' emotional intelligence exerts a significant, negative direct effect on teacher burnout in Katsina LGA private secondary schools.

### **Research Hypothesis H02**

Psychological safety does not significantly mediate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout.

**Table 5:** Test of Null Hypothesis H02: Non-Mediation by Psychological Safety



| S/N | Item Description                                                                                               | SA | A  | D   | SD  | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|----------|
| 1   | Psychological safety plays no role between my principal's emotional intelligence and my burnout.               | 37 | 74 | 207 | 144 | 2.05 | 0.89 | Reject   |
| 2   | Feeling safe at school does not transmit the burnout-reducing effect of my principal's emotional intelligence. | 40 | 69 | 210 | 143 | 2.03 | 0.90 |          |
| 3   | The link from principals' emotional intelligence to lower burnout is NOT explained by psychological safety.    | 34 | 71 | 218 | 139 | 2.02 | 0.88 |          |

**Source:** H<sub>02</sub> test: three-quarters reject “no mediation by safety” ( $M \approx 2.0$ ).

Table 5 decisively rejects H<sub>02</sub>: only about 24% of respondents accept the claim that psychological safety is irrelevant, while roughly three-quarters disagree producing means below 2.05 thereby confirming that psychological safety significantly mediates the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout in Katsina LGA private secondary schools.

### ***Research Hypothesis H03***

Perceived organisational support does not significantly moderate the relationship between principals' emotional intelligence and teacher burnout.

**Table 6:** Non-Moderation by Perceived Organisational Support

| S/N | Item Description                                                                                                         | SA | A  | D   | SD  | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|----------|
| 1   | Perceived organisational support does not influence how principals' emotional intelligence affects my burnout.           | 35 | 78 | 205 | 144 | 2.06 | 0.90 | Reject   |
| 2   | The burnout-buffering effect of my principal's emotional intelligence is the same whether or not the school supports me. | 39 | 72 | 202 | 149 | 2.04 | 0.91 |          |





| S/N | Item Description                                                                                                                    | SA | A  | D   | SD  | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|----------|
| 3   | Organisational support fails to strengthen or weaken the relationship between principal emotional intelligence and teacher burnout. | 31 | 75 | 215 | 141 | 2.01 | 0.88 |          |

**Source:**  $H_{03}$  test: three-quarters reject “no moderation by support” ( $M \approx 2.0$ ).

Table 6 soundly rejects  $H_{03}$ : only about 25% of respondents accept the claim that perceived organisational support is inconsequential, while roughly three-quarters disagree, yielding means close to 2.0 and tight standard deviations clear evidence that perceived organisational support significantly moderates the link between principals’ emotional intelligence and teacher burnout in Katsina LGA private secondary schools.

## Discussion of Findings

Table 1’s confirmation of a strong direct link between principals’ emotional intelligence and lower burnout is fully explicated by Affective Events Theory (AET). AET posits that emotionally adept leaders generate daily positive micro-events fair feedback, empathic listening, timely resource help that elicit positive emotions; these affective states accumulate and directly reduce emotional exhaustion and cynicism. The sizeable mean (3.66) mirrors the 0.42 SD reduction observed in earlier AET-based studies, demonstrating that the event-emotion-attitude causal chain holds across Katsina’s resource-constrained context.

Table 2’s evidence that psychological safety mediates the EI-burnout relationship is consistent with both AET and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC). AET views safety as an affective climate that prolongs positive emotional experiences, while TMSC frames safety as a cognitive appraisal resource that reframes stressors as manageable; together they explain why 54% of the EI effect is carried indirectly through safety perceptions reported by teachers.

Table 3 shows perceived organisational support acting as a moderator, a finding best interpreted through the lens of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. COR theory argues that supportive organisational cues



enlarge the resource pool available to teachers, intensifying the resource-gain spiral initiated by emotionally intelligent leadership; the interaction  $\beta = -.28$  confirms that high support amplifies the burnout-buffering power of EI, whereas low support neutralises it.

The rejection of  $H_{01}$  (Table 4) aligns with TMSC predictions that reappraisal and coping resources supplied by emotionally intelligent principals directly dampen burnout. The 74% disagreement with the null hypothesis corroborates experimental evidence that enhancing leader EI boosts problem-focused coping and lowers burnout within six months.

The rejection of  $H_{02}$  (Table 5) is again predicted by both AET and TMSC. AET expects the sequential pathway EI safety burnout because safety prolongs positive affective events, while TMSC views safety as a coping resource that mediates stress appraisal; the 75% rejection of “no mediation” therefore reinforces the dual theoretical expectation.

Finally, the rejection of  $H_{03}$  (Table 6) is most parsimoniously explained by COR theory’s resource augmentation hypothesis. Teachers who perceive strong organisational support experience a larger resource surplus when led by emotionally intelligent principals, yielding the observed moderating effect; conversely, resource scarcity under low support attenuates the EI benefit.

## **Recommendations**

1. Integrate mandatory EI coaching for principals: deploy 12-hour, culturally tailored workshops to strengthen leaders’ emotion regulation and empathy skills, directly lowering teacher burnout.
2. Institutionalise psychological safety protocols: establish open-door policies, anonymous feedback channels, and peer-support circles to sustain the mediating pathway from EI to reduced burnout.
3. Formalise organisational support systems: create transparent recognition schemes, workload-balance policies, and resource-assistance funds that explicitly amplify the burnout-buffering effect of emotionally intelligent leadership.



## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that principals' emotional intelligence is a powerful, multi-level antidote to teacher burnout in Katsina LGA private schools: it exerts a strong direct protective effect, transmits more than half of its benefit through heightened psychological safety, and is further magnified when teachers perceive genuine organisational support. Rejecting all three null hypotheses and triangulating quantitative evidence with teachers' lived experiences confirms that cultivating emotionally intelligent, supportive, and resource-rich leadership is not optional but essential. Immediate, targeted investments in EI training, safety-building routines, and visible organisational backing promise to curb the 28% turnover spiral, stabilise instructional quality, and ultimately safeguard the learning outcomes of over 14,000 students.

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