

THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This research work investigated the influence of emotional intelligence on secondary school students' academic achievement. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select 200 SS1 Students from five senior secondary schools in Lagos State. A 33-item 'Emotional intelligence scale with a cronbach alpha value of 0.87 was used, the Students JSS3 final result was used to measure the students' academic performance. Three hypotheses were tested. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation and T-test statistical procedures were used to analyse data. The result indicated that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and students' academic achievement, no significant difference in the emotional intelligence of males and females students and no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students. Based on the findings, the implications for counseling were highlighted and it was recommended among others that enabling environment should be provided to make teaching and learning more productive.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Secondary School Student, Academic Achievement.

Introduction

Academic excellence by the students is the major expectation of every school, teacher, parents and every stakeholder of education. The actualization of this depends on the teacher and other school personnel coupled with the contribution of the student himself. The teacher and the student constitute the oil that lubricate the factors of academic performance and educational enterprise as a whole (Okpala, 2006; Adesemowo, 2005; Tenibiaje, 2009; Desoete, 2008; and Adesemowo, 2005) expressed the belief that academic achievement would be improved upon if the factors influencing academic excellence are adequately addressed.

Some of the factors that could influence academic achievement include, student's self-concept, self-efficacy, parental involvement, career and educational aspiration and peer influence. Aside these, emotional intelligence may exert influence on secondary school students academic achievement. Academic achievement leaves much achievement to be desired and there is every need for education researchers to continue to explore this frontier of knowledge (Aremu & Oluwole 2001).

Emotional intelligence is the critical psychological factor in the behavior of students in educational settings. This construct has enjoyed great attention from scholars. It has been demonstrated unequivocally that emotional intelligence is associated with success at school and school achievement. For instance, referrals to the principals reduced by 95% after emotional intelligence training (Akinboye, 2002). According to this source, social and emotional skills have been found to create higher educational achievement. Also, he found that increased emotional skills increased "on task" behaviours, reduced discipline problems.

Emotional intelligence has been found to play indirectly a role in a person's continued success (Berger, 2005). Emotional intelligence has been defined as students' capability to understand and cope with a situation and the stress that is involved. Emotional intelligence has been regarded as a critical factor in human success. It was estimated that 80% of human success could be attributed to emotional intelligence while the remaining 20% belong to intelligence quotation (Goleman, 1995). This variable has recently engaged the attention of researchers (Adeyemo, 2007). Goleman (1995) has defined emotional intelligence as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others for motivating ourselves, for

managing emotion well in ourselves and in our relationship". Emotional intelligence as noted by Mayer and Salovey (1987) is the ability to monitor one's and other's emotion to discriminate among and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action. To them, emotional intelligence comprises four broad and interrelated competences: Perception, appraisal and expression of emotion, using emotion to facilitate thinking, understanding, analyzing and implementing emotional knowledge and managing emotion.

Emotional intelligence is now the popular phrase used to describe the art of handling emotionally charged situation; the ability to stay focused under, deal; with conflict. Handle criticism, diffuse anger and manage other forms of confrontation that can make or break one in life; it requires emotional intelligence to make it to the top.

Mcluskey (1997) explained emotional intelligence as the mental ability we are born with which gives us our emotional sensitivity and our potential for emotional learning management skills which can help us maximize our long term health, happiness and survival. Akinboye (2003) described emotional intelligence as the ability to organize emotions driven perception, intuition and thought processes plus the ability to express such emotion – laden behavior interpersonally as well as build trust, honesty, integrity, fairness, human dignity and integrity in life.

A cursory look at all the definitions and explanations of emotional intelligence revealed an agreement as they all tend to point to the same direction, that is, being intelligent with emotions and using the message passed to resolve all life conflicts.

Bar-On (2000) proposed a model of emotional intelligence which provides a theoretical basis for the EQ-I which was originally designed to assess various aspects of this construct as well as to examine its conceptualization. In this model emotional-social intelligence is a cross section of inter-related emotional and social competencies, skills, and factors that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them and cope with daily demands. According to Bar-On (2000), this model of emotional and social intelligence has very much in common with the earlier models that have one or more of the following components which are abilities to recognize, understand, and express emotions and feelings; the ability to understand how others feel and relate with them; the ability to manage and control emotion; the ability to manage change, adapt, and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature and the ability to generate positive effects and be self-motivated.

Based on Bar-On's model, to be emotionally and socially intelligent is to effectively understand and express oneself, to understand and relate well with others, and to successfully cope with daily demands, challenges and pressures. At the intrapersonal level, it involves the ability to be aware of one self, to understand one's strength and weaknesses and to express one's feelings and thoughts non-destructively. On the interpersonal level, being emotional and socially intelligent encompasses the ability to be aware of other's emotion, feelings and needs and to establish and maintain cooperative, constructive and mutually satisfying relationships.

Numerous studies have identified emotional intelligence as a critical psychological factor in the behaviour of individuals. The construct of emotional intelligence has enjoyed tremendous attention from stakeholders of education. EI started its journey to prominence in 1920 when Thorndike (Thorndike, 1920) formulated the concept of "social intelligence". Since then other forms of intelligence have been identified by scholars in the field of psychology. Three clusters of intelligence have been identified. These are abstract intelligence which pertains to the ability to understand and manipulate verbal and mathematical symbols; concrete intelligence, which describes the ability to understand and manipulate objects; and social intelligence, which describes the ability to understand and relate with people.

Emotional intelligence has been found to impact on psychological health – particularly occupational stress (Ciarrochi, Chan and Caputi, 2000). They also posited that emotional intelligence may protect people from stress and lead to better adaptation. They opined that an objective measure of emotion management skill is associated with a tendency to maintain an experimentally induced positive mood which has obvious implication for preventing stress. Again, Bar-On (2000) found that there was a moderate yet significant relationship between emotional and social intelligence and psychological health. The aspects of emotional and social intelligence competencies that were found to impact on psychological health are: the ability to manage emotion and cope with stress, the drive to accomplish personal goals in order to actualize one's inner potential and lead a more meaningful life, and the ability to verify feelings and thinking.

Berger (2005) discovered that emotional intelligence scores correlated with academic achievement after controlling for general Intelligence. The studies of Bar-On (1997) and Stewart (1996) indicated that there is a strong indication that emotional

intelligence is predictive of academic success. Adeyemo (2007) also found that emotional Intelligence contributed to individual cognitive based performance and above the level attributed to general intelligence and this relationship was positive. Adeyemo and Adetona (2007) using Path Analysis found that Emotional Intelligence has direct relationship with students learning outcome in Mathematics.

Academic performance improves when learners are relieved of the stress that disturbs their academic focus. Students who are emotionally well are much better equipped to succeed. There are studies that indicate relationship between emotional intelligence, life success and academic achievement. Researchers e.g. (Adeyemo, 2007; Berger, 2005) adopting the traits approach to the study of Emotional intelligence have found that adolescents with high traits emotional intelligence are happier than those with low trait and are capable of performing better in their academics. These adolescents cope better with transition to high school. There is also evidence to show that emotional intelligence moderates the link between stress and mental health, particularly depression and hopelessness (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Berger (2005) noted that emotional intelligence scores correlate with academic achievement. Swart (1996) also found that emotional intelligence is predictive of academic success. Chi , Cahn and Caputi (2000) reported that females reported significantly higher emotional intelligence than did males.

Emotional Intelligence has been viewed to be important, for teachers, educators even to all stakeholders, in predicting academic success; some studies have found that emotional intelligence is not a strong predictor of academic achievement regardless of whether ability or trait Emotional measures are used (Bar-On, 2000 & Salovey & Mayer, 1990) found that emotional intelligence while having no influence on Mathematics and Science performance; moderate the effects of IQ on English and over all performance.

This study discusses the influence of emotional intelligence in students' academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on secondary school students' academic achievement in Lagos State, Nigeria secondary schools. The study also investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

Research Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between emotional intelligence and students' academic achievement.
2. There will be no significant difference in the emotional intelligence of male and female students.
3. There will be no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using the ex-post facto type. This is so because the researcher is only interested in determining the influence of the independent variable on the criterion variable without manipulating the independent variable.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The population for the study comprised all senior secondary school (SS1) students in Lagos State. Two hundred (200) students were randomly selected from five secondary schools drawn from five divisions of the state. They were made up of one hundred (100) males and one hundred (100) females. Their ages range from 14 – 18 years with the mean age of 16 years.

Instrumentation

Data were obtained from Emotional Intelligence Scale by Schutte, Manlout, Hall Haggerty, Cooper, Golden Dorheim (1998). The instrument was a 33-item self-report measure of emotional intelligence on a five-point-scale – Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). Typical items in the instrument include “When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them”, “I know when my emotions change”. The instrument has demonstrated a high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha value of 0.87 and a test retest reliability coefficient value of 0.78.

The students' JSSCE results provided the basis for measuring the students' academic performance. The averages of the scores in four core subjects as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) were used to measure the academic achievement. The subjects include English Language, Mathematics, Social Studies and Integrated Science.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant difference between emotional intelligence and students' academic success.

Table I: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Students' Academic Achievement

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	r	Sig	P
Emotional Intelligence	200	38.86	.5410	0.771	0.000	<0.05
Academic Achievement	200	52.90	5.863			

The result of hypothesis I showed a r value of 0.771; this is a very high and positive value which explained that emotional intelligence has positive relationship with academic achievement. The significance (0.01) which was less than 0.05 showed that the relationship was significant; hence emotional intelligence has a significant influence on students' academic achievement.

Table II: T-test Analysis of Differences in the Emotional Intelligence of Male and Female Students

Variable	N	\bar{X}	Df	tcal	tcrit	P
Male	100	76.2	198	-0.97	1.96	NS
Female	100	75.4				

The result of hypothesis II above indicated that there was no significant difference in the emotional intelligence of male and female students. Male, $x = 76.2$, female, $x = 75.4$. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Table III: T-test Analysis of Differences in the Mean Achievement of Male and Female Students

Variable	N	\bar{X}	Df	tcal	tcrit	
Male	100	50.7	198	-0.35	1.96	
Female	100	51.4				

The result showed that there was no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students. Male, $x = 50.7$; female, $x = 51.4$. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between emotional intelligence and students' academic achievement. The outcome shows that emotional intelligence has positive influence on students' academic achievement. This result corroborates the findings of Berger (2005) who noted that emotional intelligence scores correlate with academic achievement. Swart (1996) also found that emotional intelligence is predictive of academic success. In essence, emotional intelligence contributes to students' academic performance. If students are alright emotionally coupled with their intelligent quotient, they are likely to perform well in their academic pursuit since emotionally well stable students are already equipped to succeed in their academics.

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence of male and female students. The result indeed indicate this that there is no significant difference but Ciarro-Chan and Caputi (2000) reported that females reported significantly higher emotional intelligence than did males. The idea that females may tend towards self-derogation on self-report did not come to play in this study. Indeed everything as revealed in this study bothered on individual differences.

The third hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the mean achievement of male and female students. The hypothesis is accepted because the result shows no significant difference in the mean achievement. This in essence means that while emotional intelligence may have influence on the mean achievement of both male and female students, it has the influence in the same way.

Implication for Counselling

The outcome of this study implies the following:

- There is the need to provide a transformative learning environment for students; the environment must be enabling to help the students develop the skills, to academic and career excellence.
- The findings have also revealed the need for counselors, teachers and psychologists to note this variable emotional intelligence while addressing students' academic problem. Indeed, schools should place emphasis on training and development in the area of emotional intelligence.
- Counseling psychologists working in the school system have a significant role to play. The professional wherewithal lies with them to work with other personnel in school to develop intervention programme to enhance the emotional intelligence of the students.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

Emotional intelligence of the students should be boosted because it is highly germane to successful performance and since the possession of emotional intelligence skills enhances performance, students should be taught to use their emotions to facilitate thinking.

Efforts should be geared towards developing emotional intelligence for success by training students to know their emotions, become emotionally literate, regulate their emotions, cultivate empathy and increase their emotional intelligence and use it.

Parents, teachers and indeed all stakeholders of education should ensure enabling academic environment for students because being psychologically and emotionally stable is a prerequisite for high academic achievement.

Conclusively, this study has established that there exists a relationship between academic achievement and emotional intelligence and no significant difference in the emotional intelligence and mean achievement male and female students, efforts should, therefore, be geared towards helping students to be emotionally and

psychologically alright so that the gains of teaching can manifest in good academic performance.

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