EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE WITHIN THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT; INFLUENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL-METRIC STATUS

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of mental health and socio-metric status on emotional intelligence of students in Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese-Ijebu, Nigeria. 750 students selected through simple raJ1dom technique were used for the study, their age ranged between 16 and 53years with mean age of 23.35 and standard deviation of 6.68. Tl1fee hypotheses were raised and answered. Three standardized instruments were used to collect data; while student t-test statistical (procedure was used to analyzed data. The findings indicated among other things that there is significant difference between emotional intelligence, mental health and socio-metric status. On the basis of these findings, it was recommended that efforts

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should be made at improving the mental heath and socio-metric status of students for effective perfom1ance of respondents as health practitioners.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, mental health, socio-metric status.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence has its roots in the concept of social intelligence that was first identified by Thorndike in 1920, which he described as the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls to act wisely in human relations. Building on the work of Thorndike (1920), Gardner (1993) included social intelligence as one of the seven intelligence domains in his theory of multiple intelligent' "5. According to Gardner, social intelligences comprise of a person's inter-personal and intra-personal intelligences. Intrapersonal intelligence relates to ones intelligence in dealing with others and is the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, 1993). Although, Mayer and Salovey coined the tern1 emotional intelligence, there are a number of emotional (EI) models that have since emerged in literature since 1990. But the three that have generated the most interest in term of

research and application are the models of Mayer and Salovey (1997), Baron (1997, 2000) and Goleman (1998a). Emotional intelligence involves such skills-control, empathy, self-motivation, handling relationships and controlling impulses. Although the construct of emotional intelligence is relatively new and under development, research evidences on it, so far, indicate a construct that appears appealing and worthy of further investigation. Numerous studies have identified emotional intelligence as a critical psychological construct in human functioning. Studies have also shown that emotional intelligence underpins many of the best decisions and most satisfying and successful lines. Attention to emotions has been shown to save time, expand opportunities, and focus energy for better results, (Copper, 1997).

Education, no doubt, remains the most outstanding development priority area in the world (Mabekoje & Ogunyemi, 2003). The core purpose of education undoubtedly, is human development, hence, in the education sector; research has demonstrated the usefulness of the construct in college students and adults. Many of the research evidences in this area go as far to suggest that emotional

intelligence will be a more effective predictor of academic success and life achievement than general intelligence (Charniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan & Adler, 1998, Goleman, -1998b, Neisser et al, 1996, Schulte et al, 1998).

Goleman (1998b) noted that emotional well-being predicts success in academic achievement, employment, marriage, and physical health, and that schools must incorporate that five dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, emotions, motivation, Going by

Pyne and Hahn (2002) opined that mental health includes both emotional stability and maturity of character, and also the strength to withstand the stress that is inherent in living in today's society without due physical or psychological discomfort. Mental health also implies the ability to judge reality accurately and to see things in terms of their long range rather than short term values (Sizes, Whitney and DeBruyne, 1999) at

With regards to classroom context and emotional intelligence, mental health means the ability to love, to be able to

- There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between male and female students of Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese-Ijebu.

- There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between students with low and those with high socio-metric status in Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese-Ijebu.

- There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between students with low and those with high mental health in Ogun State College of Technology

Instrument

Three standardized instruments were used to collect data for this study.

Emotional intelligence

Subjects' Emotional Intelligence was measured using the 33-item EI scale developed by Schulte et al (1998). This scale was based on the model of EI developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990). A 5 point Likert-type scale was provided, where 1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree. The scale items of intro...

intelligence will be a more effective predictor of academic success and life achievement than general intelligence (Charniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan & Adler, 1998, Goleman, -1998b, Neisser et al, 1996, Schulte et al, 1998). Goleman (1998b) noted that emotional well-being predicts success in academic achievement, employment, marriage, and physical health, and that schools must incorporate that five dimensions of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, ability to handle emotions, motivation, empathy and social skills). Going by Goleman (1995) theoretical analysis, the concept of emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotions; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. The major goal of the school at any level, is to enhance emotional and intelligence growth and by extension, moral and social development of the students. The issue therefore, is whether emotional intelligence has any effect on mental health.

Mental health is a crucial psychological factor with respect to human behaviour.

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With regards to classroom context and emotional intelligence, mental health means the ability to love, to be able to sustain affectionate relationships with other persons. Mental health means the ability to make realistic and dependent judgements based on a sound of right and wrong (Muhammad, 2006). Mental health also demands satisfaction of needs such as hunger, thirst, sex, self-assertiveness, self esteem and self-actualization in such a way that neither self nor other persons are hurt (Muhammad, 2006).

The focus of this study therefore gives consideration to the influence of mental health and socio-metric status in relation to emotional intelligence with the classroom context. To achieve this, three hypotheses were raised

- There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between male and female students of Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese-Ijebu.

- There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between students with low and those with high socio-metric status in Ogun State College of Health technology, Ilese-Ijebu.

- There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between students with low and those with high mental health in Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese- Ijebu.

Method

- 750 students (male - 185, female - 565) were selected with the use of simple random sampling technique from the following departments: Public Health Nursing, Community Health, Environmental Health and Disease Control, Pharmacy Technician, Health Information Management and Medical laboratory Technician. The mean age was 23.35 (standard deviation of 6.68).

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Socio-metric status
Subjects' socio-metric status was assessed using a socio-metric instrument which requires that students write names or three members of their class with who they can work with as a group/team. The first name was scored 3 points; second name was scored 2 points; while the third name was scored 1 point. The

total number scores for each student were got by adding up all their scores on the socio-metric ratings. Fractional percentages of the socio-metric scores for each department was got to account for differences in the number of students in each of the department sampled; this provided a good background for comparison. Subjects below the average socio-metric score was classified as low while those above the average were classified as high in socio-metric status.

Mental health

Mental health was measured using the mental heath inventory (MH1-5); developed by Viet and Ware Jnr, (1983). The scale is a 5-item scale with options based on the 6-points Likert's scale ranging from I = none of the time to 6 = all of the time. Items include; How much of the time, during the past months have you felt calm and peaceful? The MHI-5 has a maximum score of 30 and a minimum score of 5. Highest scores are desirable in that they indicate the experience of psychological well-being and the absence of psychological distress during the past months.

Procedure

Respondents were given a brief explanation of the research and asked to provide unbiased responses while working independently on the instruments without collaboration. The researchers with the help of other three research assistants administered and collected the instruments from the students the same day. The instruments were coded and analysed with the use of simple percentage and frequency counts to analyse the demographic data of the respondents while t-test was used to test the hypotheses under study.

Results

Results of data analyses are presented below, these have been tested for significance at the 0.05

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents by gender.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid male	185	24.7	24.7	24.7
Female	565	75.3	75.3	100.0
Total	750	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows 75.35% of the respondents were female 24.7% of them were male.

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents by age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 14	3	.4	.4	.4
15	6	.8	.8	1.2
16	13	1.7	1.7	2.9
17	19	2.5	2.5	3.5
18	63	8.4	8.4	13.9
19	76	10.1	10.1	24.0
20	136	18.1	18.1	42.1
21	149	19.9	19.9	62.0
22	53	7.1	7.1	69.1
23	35	4.7	4.7	73.7
24	37	4.9	4.9	78.7
25	12	1.6	1.6	80.3
26	11	1.5	1.5	81.7
29	2	.3	.3	82.0
30	2	.3	.3	82.3
31	3	.4	.4	82.7
32	33	4.4	4.4	87.1
33	2	.3	.3	87.3
34	5	.7	.7	88.0
35	13	1.7	1.7	89.7
36	9	1.2	1.2	90.9
37	13	1.7	1.7	92.7
38	15	2.0	2.0	94.7
39	9	12	12	95.9
40	21	2.8	2.8	98.7
41	3	.4	.4	99.1
42	2	.3	.3	99.3
43	2	.3	.3	99.6
53	3	.4		100.0
Total	750	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 revealed the age of the respondents as shown above with highest percentage age 21 years (19.9%).

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents by their marital status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid male	108	14.4	14.4	14.4
Single	642	85.6	85.6	100.0
Total	750	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that 85.6% of the respondents are single while 14.4% are married.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents by their departments

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Community health	296	39.5	39.5	39.5
Environmental technology	210	28.0	28.0	67.5
Medical lab tech	114	15.2	15.2	82.7
Pharmacy technician	50	6.7	6.7	89.3
Health Information Management	70	9.3	9.3	98.7
Public health nursing	10	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	750	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 reveals that 296 (39.5%) of the respondents are from the community health department, 210 (28%) from environmental health and disease control, 114 (15.2%) from medical lab. 50 (6.7%) from pharmacy technician, 70 (9.3%) from health information management and 10 (1.3%) from health nursing department.

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Testing the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between male and female of Ogun State College of Health Technology Ilese-Ijebu.

Table 5: COMPARISIONS BETWEEN MALE AND FAMALE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Variables	N	Mean	Df	T	Sig
Male	185	125.82	748	-7.802	0.00
Female	565	133.02	748	-7.802	0.00

The table shows (7.802) which is significant at 0.05 (p < 0.05). This shows that there is significant difference between the emotional intelligence of male and female respondents. The mean values, 125.82 for male and 133.02 for female indicates that female respondents are better in emotional intelligence than their male counterparts.

Hypothesis 2: There is significant difference between the emotional intelligence between students with low and those with high socio-metric status in Ogun State College of Health technology, Ilese-Ijebu.

Table 6: COMPARISONS BEWTEEN LOW AND HIGH SOCIO-METRIC STATUS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Variables	N	Mean	Df	T	Sig
Low socio-metric status	215	128.06	748	-4.970	0.00
High socio-metric status	565	132.53	748	-4.970	0.00

The table shows a t-value (-4.970) which is significant at 0.05 (p < 0.05) This shows that there is significant difference between the emotional intelligence of low socio-metric status and high socio-metric status. The mean values 128.06 for low and 132.5 for high indicates that respondents with high socio-metric status are better in emotional intelligence than their low socio-metric status counterparts.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the emotional intelligence between students with low and those with high mental health in Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese-Ijebu.

Table 7: COMPARISON BEWTEEN LOW AND HIGH MENTAL HEALTH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Variables	N	Mean	Df	T	Sig
Low metal health	263	132.82	748	2.808	0.005
High metal health	487	130.40	748	2.808	0.005

The table shows a t-value (2.808) which is significant at 0.05 (p<0.05). This shows that there is significant difference between the emotional intelligence of low mental health and high mental health respondents. The mean values, 132.82 for low and 130.40 for high indicate that, respondents with low mental health have better emotional intelligence than their counterparts with high mental health.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that significant differences exist between emotional intelligence of male and female students with the female have higher level. It is not amazing, several studies of this nature have indicated females to be better than males in emotional issues. As there are many factors of emotional intelligence, Sutarso (1996) found from the study of the effect of gender and grade point average (GPA) on emotional intelligence a significant multivariate effect of gender on three factors of emotional intelligence. Female students had higher score on the comparison and self-awareness factors than male counterpart.

Results of this study also revealed a significant difference in the emotional intelligence between students with low socio-metric status and those with high socio-metric status. This is not surprising, Gore (2000) has implemented and evaluated a curriculum designed to help students with varying degrees of emotional intelligence, improve their social adeptness. The findings of this also corroborated with that of Mabekoje and Ogunyemi (2003) when investigating on the influence of gender and socio-metric

status on emotional intelligence within the classroom context.

Furthermore, the outcome of this study has also shown that there is significant difference between the emotional intelligence of low mental health and high mental health respondents with the fact that those with low mental health are better in emotional intelligence than their high mental health counterpart. This could be as a result of self-disclosure on the part of the student. The rate at which individuals are willing and actually disclosed themselves in both a trait and communication factor. Mental health is a crucial psychological factor with respect to human behaviour, Brain, (2002).

Conclusion/Recommendation

This study has helped in determining the relationship between emotion intelligence within the classroom context justifying the influence of mental health. It is on this basis that the following recommendations are made.

✔ Classroom programme should be designed in such a way that it will enhance individual students coping skills such as decision making and problem solving skills.

✔ As emotional intelligence involves a cluster of skills, including self-control, zeal, persistence, and self-motivation, every student must be taught the essentials of handling anger, managing conflicts, developing empathy, and controlling impulses.

✔ Institutions especially schools should help recognise and manage their emotions.

✔ Lecturers should model emotional intelligence in caring, respectful interactions with students.

✔ Schools should design programmes that would assist students in developing interpersonal, intrapersonal and emotional intelligence, and to also develop tolerance and acceptance of differences.

✔ The development of interpersonal skills should however focus on positive interpersonal environments, conflict management, appreciating, tolerating and accepting individual differences.

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