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Research Paper

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS A CORRELATES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN AWKA EDUCATION ZONE

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ABSTRACT **This study investigated emotional intelligence as correlate of psychological adjustment among secondary school adolescents in Awka Education Zone, Anambra one, Anambra State. The study was guided by one research question and one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlation research design was employed for the study. The population of the study was 4,421 senior secondary two (SS2) students from 61 secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. The Sample size of the study comprised 485 SS2 obtained using simple random sampling technique. Two sets of questionnaire titled "Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) "and Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire (PAQ)" were used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Crombach Alpa Coefficent. The EIQ yielded a coefficient of *0.85 and PAQ yielded a coefficient of 0.76. The data obtained was analyzed using. The results of the study showed among others that there was a positive relationship between adolescents' emotional intelligence and their psychological adjustment. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others workshop on emotional intelligence should be organized for the teachers by the school board to understand the importance of emotional intelligence and how they can enhance students' emotional intelligence.*

KEYWORDS :Adolescents, Adjustment, Psychological adjustment and Emotional

INTRODUCTION

Generations after generations have recognized the fact that adolescents are the future leaders of the society. Adolescents' are the leaders of tomorrow; those who will carry on with the values and mores of the society. Moreover, adolescence stage is of significant importance because it is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. As a transition period it has its attendant challenges given that new bio-social challenges begin to emerge. This supports Bandura's (2005) assertion that different periods of life have their unique challenges and competent demands for successful functioning and that changing aspirations, time perspectives, and societal systems over the course of life span alter how people structure, regulate, and evaluate their lives.

Carlo, Fabes, Laible and Kupanoff (1999) noted that few developmental periods are characterized by so many changes as at early adolescence which in turn spills up a heightened potential both for positive and negative outcomes. To Ajidahun (2011), peculiarities in adolescence make it a period distinguishable from other human developmental phases. It is a period of enormous potentialities as well as bare-faced challenges making many to refer to it as a period of stress and storm. The adolescence period has been viewed as a transition period with its incredible manifestation of dynamic abilities and potentials. It begins with the growth spurt and accelerates into other exploratory stages which prepare the individual for stability and commitment in life (Sebastian, Burnett & Blakemore, 2008). In the journey to adult stability and commitment in life, there appear challenges that need to be addressed and most of the times adolescents are trapped in these circumstances. They need to be psychosocially adjusted for them to successfully become useful adults.

Scholars have articulated different definitions of adjustment. Weiten and Lioyd (2003) defined adjustment as the psychological process through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Kulshrestha in Ugodulunwa and Anakwe (2012), described adjustment process as a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tension, conflicts and meet his or her needs while making efforts at the same time to maintain harmonious relationship with the environment. This implies that the individual and the environment are important factors in adjustment. School adjustment however, refers to the process of bringing an individual's behaviours in conformity with the norms of the school setting. It is a continuous process that is geared towards the adaptation of the individual to school's life and culture.

Adjustment is a continuous process by which a person varies his / her behaviour to produce a more harmonious relationship between his / herself and his / her environment. Psychological adjustment implies changes in one's thinking and way of life to the demands of the situation. This is why Hoyt and Stanley (2012) noted psychological adjustment as the quality of life, self-concept, optimism, well-being and so forth. Psychological adjustment is a condition or state in which one feels that one's needs have been (or will be) fulfilled and one's behaviours conform to the needs of a given environment. It refers to changes in life that are made continuously when one is in dire need. Adjustment is not static but dynamic. Thus, it is a behavioural process by which a person maintains balance among various needs that one encounters at a given point of time. Each and every situation of life demands that the person concerned should be able to effectively perform in accordance with some guiding principles and should be able to strike a balance among various forces. Psychological adjustment is also a process wherein one builds variation in the behaviour to achieve harmony with oneself, other people or the environment with an aim to maintain a state of equilibrium between the individual and the environment.

Adolescents psychological adjustment problem may develop as a result of new challenges faced as they encounter physiological, emotional, and social changes. Adolescents being faced with psychological adjustment problem might be a result of low emotional intelligence since emotional intelligence has to do with the self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups.

Emotional intelligence is very vital to adolescents psychological adjustment. Mayer, Salovey and Cruso (2000), describe emotional intelligence as the capacity to perceive, understand and manage emotions that are closely related to several human values such as life satisfaction, and quality of interpersonal relationships and success in occupations that involve considerable reasoning with emotional information. Emotional intelligence is a self-perceived ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups Singh (2011). It is the capacity to recognize one's own feelings and those of others, motivate oneself and manage emotions well in both inter and intra-relationships. Contextually, emotional intelligence stands to mean how intelligent individuals are in handling their emotions and those of others in both intra and inter relationships. It comprises the ability to examine, control, regulate and manage emotions. As individuals face daily challenges of life, they react differently even in the same situation and what probably will make a difference is the capacity to handle the emotion elicited by such situations. When it is properly handled, the individual gets

adjusted to the situation.

It should be pointing out that emotional intelligence may be an influential factor on adolescents psychological adjustment. Thus, Adolescent with high emotional intelligence is supposed to be easily adjusted to the demands of the society. The individual should find it easier to form and maintain interpersonal relationships and to 'fit in' to group situations. The individual also should have better understanding of his/her own psychological state, which can include managing stress effectively and being less likely to suffer from depression. Goleman theory (1995) on emotional intelligence states that emotional intelligence is equal to, if not more important than, intelligence quotient (IQ) as an important indicator of success in one's professional and personal life. Goleman explained that an individual's emotional intelligence can affect one's work situation and academic disposition. Nevertheless, the effective use of emotion is basic to function successfully in academic and leadership activities. Adolescent who has emotional competency can better deal with the pressure of peer politics, the higher demands required for academics, and the temptations of alcohol, drugs and sex. Emotional intelligence may act as a moderator of the effects of cognitive skills on academic performance (Fernández- Berrocal, Extremra & Ramos, 2003); (Gil-Olarte, Palomera & Brackett 2006); (Pérez &Castejón, 2007). Additionally, the ability to pay attention to one's emotions, experience feelings with clarity and be able to recover from negative states of mind will be a decisive influence on students' mental health, and this psychological balance in turn is related to and ultimately affects academic performance. Persons with limited emotional skills are therefore more likely to experience stress and emotional difficulties during their studies, and consequently will benefit more from the use of adaptive emotional skills that allow them to cope with these difficulties.

Many Scholars indicate that emotional and social skills or empowerment of emotional intelligence occupies a great role in the quality improvement of personal and social relationships (Abadi1, Zadegan, Gorgij& Dadkan, 2014). This is very important in psychological adjustment since it has a lot to do with ones' ability to cope with stress, tension, and conflicts while at the same time the individual strives to maintain harmonious relationship with the environment. This made Gorostiaga, Balluerka, Aritzeta, Haranburu, and Alonso-Arbiol (2011) to assert that emotional intelligence is related to psychological and social adjustment. Fernandez-Berroca and Extremera (2008) opined that high level of attention to and monitoring of one's own feelings and emotions has been indicated as precursor or ruminative thinking. Fernandez –Berrocal and Extremera reported that adolescents with limited emotional intelligence are more likely to experience stress and emotional difficulties in their adjustments and consequently will benefit more from the use of adaptive emotional skill that allows them to cope with these difficulties.

According to Brackett (2006), adolescents with strong emotional intelligence are capable of offering those around adequate information about their psychological state. They reported conclusively that in order to manage emotional state of others, it is necessary to manage one's own emotional state. Studies by Busari (2013), investigated emotional intelligence as a predictor of psychosocial adjustment, anxiety and depression among Nigerian adolescents. The study indicated that adolescents with high scores in attending to their feelings and low scores in emotional clarity and repair have poor psychological adjustment which indicated high level of anxiety, depression and stress and suggestive of low level of mental health. Busari studies also indicated that attention to feelings and emotional repair significantly predicted adolescents psychological adjustment. Likewise, the study by Lourdes Reg, Natalio Extremera and Mario Pena (2011), examine the relationship between emotional intelligence, self efficacy and life satisfaction. The study indicated that mood clarity and emotional repair have significant direct or indirect link with adolescents psychological adjustment. Literature revealed that students with higher emotional intelligence report fewer physical symptoms, less social anxiety and depression, greater use of active coping strategies for problem solving and less rumination Salovey, Stroud, Wooley, Epel (2002). It was against this background that this study sought to find out if emotional intelligence correlates adolescents psychological adjustment in Awka Education Zone. Specifically the paper sought to find out the:

1. Nature of relationship between adolescents emotional intelligence and their psychological adjustment

1.2 Research Question

One research question guided the study

1. What is the nature of relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescents' psychological adjustment?

1.3 Hypothesis

One hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescent students psychological adjustment.
2. **Method**

Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The area of this study was Awka Education Zone with the population of 4,421senior secondary two (SS2) students. The sample size comprised 450 senior secondary two (SS2) school students' from ten schools. The researcher used multistage simple random sampling technique employing the balloting technique for the sample size collection. The study was guided by three research questions and one null hypothesis. Two instruments titled Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) and Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts, one academic staff in the Educational Psychology Unit of Department of Educational Foundations, another from Education Measurement and Evaluation Unit and another in the Department of Educational Guidance and Counseling Department all from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts commented on each items' appropriateness and acceptability and their judgments were used for pilot test. Cronbach's alpha procedure was used for testing the reliability instrument. The EIQ yielded a coefficient of 0. 86 and PAQ yielded a coefficient of 0.76. Data collected for the study were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

3. **Results**

Research Question 1: What is the nature of relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescents' psychological adjustment?

The result presented on Table 1 shows that the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, r. (485) = .512. This is an indication that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescents' psychological adjustment.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between emotional

intelligence and adolescent students psychological adjustment.

As shown on Table 2, the *p*-value of 0.02 < 0.05; since the *p*-value is less than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescent students psychological adjustment.

4. **Discussion**

The result of the study shows that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological adjustment of secondary school adolescents. Students at their adolescents tend to experience emotional outburst. At such stage, adolescents are full of drama. However, those with better perception, clarity and monitor of their emotion rely on their conviction about what they perceived of themselves and can better regulate their psychological behaviours and expression.

The study establishes that positive emotional intelligence of the adolescents will lead to a better psychological adjustment. This is especially true because students who are capable of expressing and understanding emotions, regulating their feelings will be better adjusted psychologically and socially. This finding is supported by Fernandez-Berrocal, Cabello and Extremera (2006) when they reported that adolescents with high emotional intelligence have a greater ability to manage their emotions, are more able to cope with their daily life activities, facilitating better psychological adjustment and so present less risk for substance abuse. Specially, adolescents with high emotional intelligence have wider repertoire of effective competence based on the understanding, management and regulation of their own emotions do not require other type of external regulators (for example, tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs) in order to recover from negative state of mind provoked by the wide range of stressful life event which they are exposed to at this age. This findings is supported by Goleman (1995), when he reported that adolescent who has emotional competency can better deal with the pressure of peers' politics, the higher demands for academics and the temptations of alcohol, drugs and sex. Adolescents exhibit the ability to manage his emotions and emotions of others in a healthy and productive manner.

The finding of this study also shows that there is significant relationship between emotional intelligence and adolescent students psychological adjustment. These findings imply that if adolescent students would be able to desist from unruly behaviours, they would definitely manage their emotion, develop interest in education, manage relationship with others appropriately and as well become conscious of their emotions. In that realm, it implies that adolescent students' would be able to set and achieve their personal goals and develop their potentials in the right direction. In the long run, they would be realistically positive in their thinking and very positively optimistic. Similarly Salovey, Stroud Wooley and Epel (2002) observed that adolescents with high emotional intelligence report fewer physical symptoms, less social anxiety and depression, greater use of acting coping strategies for problem solving and less rumination. According to Brackett (2006), adolescents with strong emotional intelligence are capable of offering those around adequate information about their psychological state. They reported conclusively that in order to manage emotional state of others, it is necessary to manage one's own emotional state. Fernandez –Berrocal, and Extremera (2008), reported that adolescents with limited emotional intelligence are more likely to experience stress and emotional difficulties in their adjustments and consequently will benefit more from the use of adaptive emotional skill that allows them to cope with these difficulties. The adolescents with poor emotional intelligence generally reported greater attention to their feelings, lower clarity and inability to regulate their own mood state. However, when such adolescent is attended to by good psychologist who will help him/her improve on his/her emotional intelligence, can better regulate his/her psychological adjustment. These collaborates with the findings by Busari (2013) that adolescents with high score in attending to feelings and low scores in emotional clarity and repair have poor psychological adjustment which indicates high level of anxiety, depression and stress and suggest low level of mental health.

6. **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the researcher recommend among others,

1. Since positive relationship exists between emotional intelligence and psychological adjustment it demands that workshop on emotional intelligence should be organized for the teachers by the school board to understand the importance of emotional intelligence and how they can enhance students' emotional intelligence.
2. Discussion classes should be encouraged where students get an opportunity to work together and understand each other's emotions. Those students having low emotional intelligence should be provided proper counseling by trained counsellors.
3. At classroom level, teachers should consciously help students, manage their emotion and affirm students so that they become more positive and optimistic.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the emotional intelligence correlate adolescent psychological adjustment. Therefore, conclude that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence adolescent students psychological adjustment.

Plan

Abstract

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- Research Question
- Hypothesis
- Method
- Results
- Discussion

Conclusion

Recommendations

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