

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN FORMAL EDUCATION IN IMO STATE: MEETING CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence and academic performance in formal education in Imo State: Meeting challenges of 21st century Nigeria. However, this study hinged on correlation research design. The study was conducted at Imo State University, Owerri. The population of the study was 6980 students of Imo State University, Owerri. The sample size of the study was 378 students of the Faculty of Education in Imo State and it was determined through Taro Yamane scientific method. The instrument for this study was constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire was titled Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance (EIAP). The questionnaire had two sections. In section A, the respondents were to give information on their data while in section B, they responded to the questionnaire items and indicated their level of agreement. It had twenty-two items which were graded on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree -SA (4), Agree - A (3), Disagreed - D (2), Strongly Disagree - SD (1). The drafted questionnaire items together with the research topic, objectives of the study, and research questions were given to experts in Measurement and Evaluation for validation. The comments of these experts were used to modify the questionnaire. A test re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to ascertain the consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The researchers administered 378 copies of the questionnaire to students by themselves with the help of two research assistants. The respondents answered the questions and the distributed copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot with a record of 100% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence can easily blend with new people and build strong relationships by exchanging thoughts with each other. It was recommended that Parents/teachers and educational institutions should foster an environment that encourages and supports self-motivation and practice reappraisal daily.

Keywords: Emotion, Emotional intelligence, academic performance

Introduction

Interest in teaching and learning social and emotional intelligence has grown in recent years. Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs have become a standard part of the curriculum for many schools. The goal of these initiatives is not only to improve health and well-being but also to help students succeed academically and prevent bullying. There are many examples of how emotional intelligence can play a role in daily life. Emotional intelligence is essential for good interpersonal communication. Some experts believe that this ability is more important in determining life success than IQ alone. Fortunately, there are things that you can do to strengthen your own social and emotional intelligence.

Understanding emotions can be the key to better relationships, improved well-being, and stronger communication skills. Cabanac (2012) opined that Emotions are mental states brought on by neurophysiological changes, variously associated with thoughts, feelings, behavioral responses, and a degree of pleasure or displeasure. There is no scientific consensus on a definition. Emotions are often intertwined with mood, temperament, personality, disposition, or creativity. Moreover, emotion is a complex experience of consciousness bodily sensation, and behavior that reflects the personal significance of a thing, an event, or a state of affairs (Solomon,2024).

Weder (2020) defined Intelligence as the ability to solve complex problems or make decisions with outcomes benefiting the action and has evolved in life forms to adapt to diverse environments for their survival and reproduction.

Performance can be seen as an act or process of staging or presenting a play, concert, or other form of entertainment. Also, it means the action or process of carrying out or accomplishing an action, task, or function. Wikipedia (2020). Invariably, academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has attained their short or long-term educational goals (Wikipedia,2024).

However, education refers to the discipline that is concerned with methods of teaching and learning in schools or school-like environments, as opposed to various non-formal and informal means of socialization (such as rural development projects and education through parent-child relationships).In other words, formal education is an education that is institutionalized, intentional, and planned through public organizations and recognized private bodies and in their totality-constitute the formal education system of a country. Formal education refers to the structured education system that runs from primary (and in some countries from nursery) school to university and includes specialized programs for vocational, technical, and professional training (European Youth Foundation,2008).

Taylee (2020) mentioned 5 ways to gain control over your emotions such as

Pause: Before you start repressing those feelings and wishing they would go away, remember that all feelings are meant to be felt. Feelings communicate your needs and give you feedback on your current situation. So how do you listen to your emotions and respond to them, instead of reacting?

Self-care: Basic functions—because of lack of sleep and loneliness—can be impaired as a result of stressful situations. To have a healthy relationship with your emotions, the key is to keep your executive function system healthy and that starts with self-care.

Buzzell (2023) emphasizes the impact of sleep and stress on executive functions. It has been shown that a lack of sleep can impair self-regulation, meaning you may have less control over your responses to your emotions, which is why you're snappy when you're tired. Sometimes, your negative emotions can keep you from falling asleep, creating a vicious cycle that further promotes the problem. This can also happen with stress, meaning having a healthy stress reduction system can also help your executive functions. So what's the solution? Find activities you enjoy and incorporate them into your daily routine, like journaling and exercise.

Maintain Healthy Relationships: healthy relationships can be used to regulate emotions by having a trusted friend or loved one to confide in, which is why you usually feel better after venting to a friend. Socializing can help to calm your mind and can even help regulate your

body's physical response to emotions. Although we can't see people face-to-face as often right now, you don't want to cut yourself off from people you were previously close to.

Stop Suppressing and Start Reappraising: Two of the most studied emotional regulation techniques are called reappraisal and suppression. Suppression is when you try to stop yourself from feeling emotions. When we do this, we often find that negative emotions return stronger than before. For example, if you made a mistake and feel disappointed, you can tell yourself that it was a learning experience and then you are more likely to have a positive response instead of a negative one. This promotes a growth mindset, which studies show promotes healthier relationships with emotions. The good news is that people can change how they regulate their emotions to be more in line with reappraisal.

Practice Mindfulness: One way to practice nonjudgmental awareness is to meditate, and it's a lot easier than you might think. Simply taking five to ten minutes a day to notice what your body and mind feel like can help you gain an understanding of your emotional habits. This can act as a practice for when you experience emotions in your regular life. When meditating, pay close attention to any emotions that may arise and how your instinct tells you to respond. You can ask yourself the following questions such as

1. What kinds of emotions arise, and how often do they come?
2. How does your body feel when they arise?
3. How does your mind respond?
4. Are there any judgments when emotions arise?
5. Is that response helpful? Is there a better way to respond?

Prevent Emotional Outbursts: Have you ever blown something small out of proportion, you probably felt pretty bad afterward. The good news is that Alexander and Buzzell (2023) believe that the best way to manage explosive emotional experiences is through a regular practice of prevention.

Cherry (2023) stated that Emotional intelligence (EI or EQ for "emotional quotient") is the ability to perceive, interpret, demonstrate, control, evaluate, and use emotions to communicate and relate to others effectively and constructively. This ability to express and control emotions is essential, but so is the ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. Some experts suggest that emotional intelligence is more important than IQ for success in life. Segal et al (2023) stated that Emotional intelligence (E.I) otherwise known as emotional quotient (E.Q) is the ability to understand, use and manage one's own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict. Keiling (2023) asserts that Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage your own emotions as well as being able to understand and influence the emotions of others. It involves being aware that emotions drive behaviors and impact people either positively or negatively. The Economic Times (2023) stated that Emotional intelligence refers to the capability of a person to manage and control his or her emotions and possess the ability to control the emotions of others as well. In other words, they can influence the emotions of other people. Segah et al (2030) assert that emotional intelligence (otherwise known as emotional quotient or EQ) is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress,

communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and defuse conflict. Emotional intelligence helps you build stronger relationships, succeed at school and work, and achieve your career and personal goals. It can also help you to connect with your feelings, turn intention into action, and make informed decisions about what matters most to you. Emotional intelligence is commonly defined by four attributes:

Self-management – You're able to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, manage your emotions in healthy ways, take initiative, follow through on commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances.

Self-awareness – You recognize your own emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behavior. You know your strengths and weaknesses and have self-confidence.

Social awareness – You have empathy. You can understand the emotions, needs, and concerns of other people, pick up on emotional cues, feel comfortable socially, and recognize the power dynamics in a group or organization.

Relationship management – You know how to develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict. Mental Health America (2023) opined that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you.

There are five key elements to EI: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. People with high EI can identify how they are feeling, what those feelings mean, and how those emotions impact their behavior and in turn, other people. It's a little harder to "manage" the emotions of other people - you can't control how someone else feels or behaves. But if you can identify the emotions behind their behavior, you'll have a better understanding of where they are coming from and how to best interact with them. High EI overlaps with strong interpersonal skills, especially in the areas of conflict management and communication - crucial skills in the workplace. Employees who can self-regulate their emotions are often able to avoid making impulsive decisions - they think objectively before they act. Operating with empathy and understanding is a critical part of teamwork; being able to attribute someone's behavior to an underlying emotion will help you manage relationships and make others feel heard. On an individual level, being aware of your feelings is the first step in not letting those feelings control you. Recognizing how you feel and why will help you to sit with those feelings and then move forward constructively.

Mental Health America (2023) Mentioned Ways of Improving Emotional Intelligence Skills with some Thoughtfulness and Practice:

1. Try to slow down your reactions to emotions - the next time you feel angry, try to sit with it before lashing out. Why are you angry? Did someone upset you? What do you think was the emotion underneath their behavior?

2. Think about your strengths and weaknesses. No one is good at everything, and that's okay! Know yourself and when to ask for - or offer - help.

3. Put in the effort to understand what people are communicating non-verbally. If you ask someone to help you on a project and they agree, but sound hesitant, recognize that they may feel overwhelmed or confused or they come from a different background and understanding than your own. It's important to validate and address that before moving forward.

4. Work on communicating effectively and openly. Make sure your main point is clear, cut out information that isn't relevant to the person you're talking with, and give your full attention when someone else is speaking.

Cherry (2023) mentioned Signs of Emotional Intelligence such as

A. An ability to identify and describe what people are feeling

B. An awareness of personal strengths and limitations

C. Self-confidence and self-acceptance

D. The ability to let go of mistakes

E. An ability to accept and embrace change

F. A strong sense of curiosity, particularly about other people

G. Feelings of empathy and concern for others

H. Showing sensitivity to the feelings of other people

I. Accepting responsibility for mistakes

J. The ability to manage emotions in difficult situations

Cherry (2023) mentioned different ways Emotional intelligence can be used in many in your daily life such as

I. Being able to accept criticism and responsibility

II. Being able to move on after making a mistake

III. Being able to say no when you need to

IV. Being able to share your feelings with others

V. Being able to solve problems in ways that works for everyone

VI. Having empathy for other people

VII. Having great listening skills

VIII. Knowing why you do the things you do

VIV. Not being judgemental of others

Goleman in Kelling (2023) Defines Five Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence such as:

Self-awareness: When someone is self-aware it means them to understand their emotions and triggers. It makes one to know his/her emotions and actions that affect those around you.

Self-regulation: It is the ability to control and adjust your emotions to create a more positive effect. Being in control of your feelings is essential in any situation because your emotions have a strong effect on other people.

Motivation: is the desire to do something. It relates to emotional intelligence because your desires can promote different feelings toward something. When you are motivated to do a series of tasks you will be in a better position to influence others. Work towards your goals consistently. Show your employees how the work is done and lead by example. Even if you are faced with a challenge try and find something good about the situation.

Empathy: allows students to identify and understand the feelings of others, which may help them to handle workplace situations more effectively. For instance, when a coworker is visibly stressed, you can react with empathy. When you can put yourself in another's shoes and think about a situation, it is known as empathy. Every successful lead should know how to empathize with others if you want to earn their respect.

Social Skills are tools one uses to communicate and interact with others. Having strong social skills allows students to listen, speak, and resolve conflicts more effectively. Social skills can be used in the workplace to develop careers and are vital tools for leaders.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that some people are not aware of their emotions and talk about the emotions of others. This can lead to misleading standings, conflicts, and poor decisions. Some still cannot regulate their own emotion and even other's emotions especially when they are intense or negative this can lead to impulsiveness, aggression, withdrawal, and damage to relationships and reputation. Furthermore, some individual cannot mitigate themselves and even others especially when faced with obstacles setbacks, or boredom. This can lead to low morale, engagement, and productivity some cannot express their own emotion even others especially when they are complex or mixed. This can lead to confusion, frustration, and miscommunication. Finally, some cannot apply their skills to different situations contexts, and roles. This can lead to inconsistency, ineffectiveness, and missed opportunities.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to x-ray emotional intelligence and academic performance in formal education in Imo State, Specifically, the study sought to:

Determine the relationship between Self-awareness and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Determine the relationship between empathy and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Determine the relationship between Self-motivation and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study

What is the relationship between Self-Awareness and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State?

What is the relationship between empathy and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State?

What is the relationship between Self-motivation and Academic performance in formal in Imo State?

Hypotheses

HO1: There is no relationship between Self-Awareness and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

HO2: There is no relationship between empathy and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

HO3: There is no relationship between Self-motivation and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Methodology

This study hinged on correlation research design. The study was conducted at Imo State University, Owerri. The population of the study was 6980 students of Imo State University, Owerri. The sample size of the study was 378 students of the Faculty of Education in Imo State and it was determined through Taro Yamane scientific method. The instrument for this study was constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire was titled Emotional Intelligence

and Academic Performance (EIAP). The questionnaire had two sections. In section A, the respondents were to give information on their data while in section B, they responded to the questionnaire items and indicated their level of agreement. It had twenty-two items which were graded on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree -SA (4), Agree – A (3), Disagreed – D (2), Strongly Disagree – SD (1). The drafted questionnaire items together with the research topic, objectives of the study, and research questions were given to experts in Measurement and Evaluation for validation. The comments of these experts were used to modify the questionnaire. A test re-test method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to ascertain the consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The researchers administered 378 copies of the questionnaire to students by themselves with the help of two research assistants. The respondents answered the questions and the distributed copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot with a record of 100% return rate.

Result

The results of the study were obtained from the research question and the hypotheses are presented together on the same table.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between Self-Awareness and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State?

Hypothesis One: There is no relationship between Self-Awareness and Academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient relationship between self-awareness and academic performance in formal education.

		CORRELATION		
		Self -Awareness Performance	Academic	
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.76	
	Sig (2-tailed)		0.14	
	N	378		378
Self-Awareness	Pearson Correlation	-0.79	1	
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.14		
	N	378		378

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result shows (-0.76) a high negative correlation between self-awareness and academic performance in formal education in Imo State. The result means that as scores on self-awareness go up, the score on academic performance goes down. The result shows that the relationship between empathy and academic performance in mathematics is significant at a 0.05 level of significance for a two-tailed test. Since the P-value (0.14) from the table is higher than the alpha level ($P > 0.05$) we therefore accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistically significant relationship between self-awareness and academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Research question Two: What is the relationship between empathy and academic performance in formal education in Imo State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between empathy and academic performance in formal education in Imo State

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient relationship between empathy and academic performance in formal education.

CORRELATION		Empathy	Academic performance
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	0.63
	Sig (2 tailed)		0.22
	N	378	378
Empathy	Pearson correlation	0.63	1
	Sig (2 tailed)	0.22	
	N	378	378

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level of (2-tailed)

The result shows (0.63) a high positive correlation between empathy and academic performance in formal education in the Imo States. The result means that as scores on empathy increase, there is a corresponding increase in academic performance. The result also shows that the relationship between empathy and academic performance in mathematics is significant at 0.05 level for a two-tailed test since the p-value (0.22) from the table is higher than the alpha level ($p > 0.05$) we therefore accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistical significant relationship between empathy and academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Research Question Three What is the relationship between self-motivation and academic performance in formal education in Imo State?

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between self-motivation and academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient between self-motivation and academic performance in formal education.

Correlation		Self-motivation	Academic performance
Academic Performance	Person correlation	1	0.66
	Sig (2-tailed)		0.197
	N	378	378
Self-motivated	Pearson Correlation	0.66	1
	Sig (2tailed)	0.197	
	N	378	378

Correlation significance at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result shows (0.66) a high positive correlation between self-motivation and academic performance in formal education in Imo State. The result means that as scores on self-motivation increase, there is a corresponding increase in academic performance. The result also shows that the relationship between self-motivation and academic performance in mathematics is significant at a 0.05 level of significance for a two-tailed test. Since the P-

value (0.20) from the table is higher than the alpha level ($P > 0.05$) we therefore accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistically significant relationship between self-motivation and academic performance in formal education in Imo State.

Discussions of findings

Self-awareness and Academic performance

The result indicated that Table 1 showed that there is a high negative correlation between self-awareness and academic performance was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. The high negative relationship between self-awareness and academic performance means that as self-awareness scores increase there is a corresponding decrease in academic performance and vice versa. This means when the student is aware of themselves, they can enjoy success in most areas of their lives, especially in academics. The finding is in line with Perry (2022) who states that Self-awareness is the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts, or emotions do or do not align with your internal standards. If you are highly self-aware, you can objectively evaluate yourself, manage your emotions, align your behavior with your values, and understand correctly how others perceive you. Developing self-awareness is important because it allows students to assess their growth and effectiveness and change course when necessary. Also, it helps students to know the strengths and weaknesses that exist in themselves and realize that behavior is controlled by their thoughts.

Empathy and Academic Performance

The result indicated that Table 2 showed that there is a high positive correlation between empathy and academic performance was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significant. The high positive relationship between empathy and academic performance means that as the empathy score increases there is a corresponding increase in academic performance and vice versa. This means empathetic student are more cooperative in class, have better relationships with their teachers, and are more engaged in school. Also, they tend to have higher GPAs and eventually greater academic performance. This finding is in line with Viadero in Bostic (2014) who indicates that a caring school environment not only affects academic performance but also reduces anti-social behaviour. However, students learn to treat others in the manner they have been treated.

Self-motivation and academic performance.

The result indicated that Table 3 showed that there is a high positive correlation between self-motivation and academic performance was found to be significant at 0.05 level of significance. The high positive relationship between self-motivation and academic performance means that as self-motivation scores increase there is a corresponding increase in academic performance and vice versa. This means students who are self-drive tend to experience good study strategy and high effort which leads to better academic performance. This study is in line with Robbins, Haltie, Plante, and Wigfield in Steinmayr, Weidinger, Schwinger, and Spinath (2019) who stated that achievement motivation energizes and directs behavior toward achievement and therefore known to be an important determinant of academic success. However, self-motivation pushes students to go beyond the minimum

requirement. Students who lack self-motivation may settle for mediocrity and merely aim for minimal requirements.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is obvious that intelligence is one of the most vital resources that nature has empowered every nation with, the success and failure of any child depend heavily on his intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to maneuver and interact with emotions as well as others. And it influences many aspects of our lives from academic grades to job performance. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence can easily blend with new people and build strong relationships by exchanging thoughts with each other. Therefore good emotional intelligence improves academic performance. Finally, challenges of emotional intelligence can be attributed to self-awareness, self-management, interpersonal skills, relationship management, and self-motivation.

Recommendations

1. Parents teachers and educational institutions should foster an environment that encourages and supports self-motivation and practice reappraisal daily.
2. The government should embark on a mass enlightenment campaign on the type of emotional intelligence that fosters academic performance
3. Having a healthy relationship with your emotions is more likely to make challenging times easier by preventing tense emotional interactions.

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