

# Emotional Intelligence as Determinant Of Potential for Academic Cheating Among Senior Secondary School Students in Ondo State

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between the components of emotional intelligence and potential for academic cheating among senior secondary school students in Ondo State Nigeria. To this end, a sample of 180 (90 male and 90 female) Senior Secondary School 3 students were selected. Two validated research instruments were used for data collection. They are Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by the researcher and the Potential for Academic Cheating Scale adopted from Hassan (2004). Data obtained from this study were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation and multiple linear regression. The results show that there is an inverse significant relationship between emotional intelligence and potential for academic cheating. There is a significant relationship also between subscales of emotional intelligence and potential for academic cheating. Collectively, emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding and Emotional management accounted for 58.6% of the variance in academic cheating. Emotional management represents the most important role to reduce academic cheating (-.462). On the other hand, emotional understanding and emotional perception are also important to reduce academic cheating (respectively = -.367, =-.187. Emotional integration cannot reduce academic cheating in this paper. Psycho-educational therapy to teach all these dimensions of emotional intelligence should be inculcated into the curriculum of secondary school students with greater emphasis on emotional management.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, determinant, potential, academic cheating

## Background to the Study

Education in Nigeria has been adopted as an instrument for national development. It is an indicator for a community's social well-being, standard of living and social justice. Akindutire (2010) sees education as the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potentials of individuals including their rights and powers. Abdulkareem (2010) also sees it as the best legacy a nation can provide for its citizenry since it brings about a relative permanent change in the thinking behavior of individuals.

In view of the realization of the laudable goals of education to national development, educational institutions were introduced for the training of the learners. Examinations were equally introduced to assess learners' level of understanding. According to Hassan and Ogunmakin (2010), whatever action that undermines examination, will definitely pose a great threat to the validity and reliability of examination results and certification. Academic cheating remains one of the most serious threats to the validity and reliability of examination results in this country. It is one of the major problems confronting educational system in Nigeria today. It shows the level of moral decadence in this country. No wonder, Labaree (1997) sees academic cheating as a rational decision in a culture of warped values.

Many reasons have been given for students' decision to engage in academic dishonest act in this country. Some of these are fears of failure, desire for better grades, pressure from others to succeed in school, low self-efficacy, peer approval, competition, and two heavy workload (Carell, Malmstrom & West, 2008; Hassan & Ogunmakin, 2010). Others also identified school programmes, teaching-learning environment, over value of certificates, decadence in Nigerian society and parental support as contributing factors for students' decision to engage in academic cheating (Badmus, 2006; Awanbor, 2005; Nwandiam; 2005; Okafor, 2006; Ayua, 2006; Azare, 2006 and Aminu, 2006).

Consequences of academic cheating in this country are great. Academic cheating has economic, social and political implications. According to APA (2010) and Onyechere (2010), the five major post-primary examination bodies in this country cancel an average of 429,000 results annually on the account of examination malpractice which translates to \$140m (N21bn) wastage. Onyechere further stressed that 16,000 security officers were recruited to provide security against malpractice for 1.4m students that took part in 2010 UTME. Academic cheating makes the goal of education unattainable, the country will end up producing graduates who lack the knowledge, skill and competence. Academic cheating makes certificates lost credibility, as such, certificates emanated from countries noted for academic cheating are disbelieved.

In the realization of the enormity of the problems of academic cheating in this country, several measures have been taken in the past to curb the menace. Such measures are Decree 21 of 1985, which stipulated a 21 year jail term for those found guilty of examination malpractice. There was decree 33 of 1999 stipulating imprisonment for a term up to five years or a fine of N50,000 or N100,000 for any person convicted of examination malpractice. At the state level, the Ondo State government has constituted some legislative and administrative enactments to deter cheating in the school system between 2000 and 2006, some public secondary schools were blacklisted from registering candidates for public examinations in the state, while some school principals were either demoted or relieved of their jobs because of their link with the examination fraud.

As a panacea to this social problem, some researchers in Nigeria are now calling for e-examination for its potential to curb academic cheating (Ayo et al 2007; Osakuade, 2011; Oyenyi, 2011). Whereas, there has been contention in some quarters in developed world calling for the re-examination and redesignation of traditional form of examination because of the failure of on-line examination to curb academic cheating (Contradson & Pedro, 2004). As a testimony to this, a research was conducted by Chula, Roger & Chris (2009) while trying to compare the extent of cheating using e-examination and traditional method of examination. Findings show that 73.6% of the students reported that it is easier to cheat in on-line examination than traditional system of examination.

Since students' decision to engage in cheating behavior is inherently psychological in nature, the assumption of the present researcher is that psychological approach might be appropriate for curbing cheating behaviour among our secondary school students in this country. In support of this proposition, psychological attributes, such as emotional intelligence, academic self efficacy, goal orientation have been implicated in the past as contributing factors in a student's decision to engage in academically dishonest act.

## **Literature Review**

After almost two decades since the official introduction of emotional intelligence in Universities, there is no unitary definition for it. Goleman (2004) thinks that emotional intelligence is a skill that anyone who owns it tries to control his life with self awareness and improve it with self management and perceive its effects through sympathy or by managing the relations he tries to improve his or others' moral. Mayer and Salovey (2004) thinks that emotional intelligence is the ability of recognition, evaluation and expressing emotions, the ability of controlling emotions to improve the growth of emotion and ration. Baron (2000) has stated that emotional intelligence is a factor of abilities, adequacy, and unknown skill that affects the ability of individuals to succeed in overcoming stress and environmental stress.

Antonakis (2009) thinks that emotional intelligence includes innate factors (self awareness, self-control, feeling independence and capacity), and external factors (relationship, ease in sympathy and amenability). Due to different reasons such as the difference among people who are engaged in this concept, there are different definitions of emotional intelligence but most of the definitions focus on ability, traits and synthetic pattern (Petrides and Furnham, 2000a).

### **Mayer and Salovey model of Emotional Intelligence**

Mayer & Salovey (2008) presented a primary model for Emotional Intelligence that has four ability components that include emotional perception, emotional interpretation, emotional understanding and emotional management. These four dimensional components are discussed below:

1. Emotional Perception: The ability to detect and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices and cultural artifacts – including the ability to identify one’s emotions.
2. Emotional Interpretation: The ability to harness emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving.
3. Emotional Understanding: The ability to comprehend emotion language and to appreciate complicated relationships among emotions.
4. Emotional Management: The ability to regulate emotions in both ourselves and in others.

### **Academic Cheating**

The Centre for Academic Integrity (CAI, 2007) defines academic cheating as dishonest behavior related to academic achievement that includes any form of advantage by one student over others. Academic cheating has significant effect on equality assessment. Cheating undermines the intent and process of assessment. Cheating interferes with an evaluator’s ability to make credible judgment. Reviewing the psychometric properties of a fair and accurate assessment provide a helpful framework of considering the impact of cheating on assessment. “Good” assessments have four properties.

They are:

1. Reliability (Smith, 2003);
2. Validity (Frey et al, 2005);
3. Standardized (Kane, Crooks & Cohen, 1999); and
4. Free of bias (Scheuneman & Oakland, 1998)

Cheating affects each of these four properties of assessments, but the effect on validity is likely to cause the most trouble.

### **The Relationship between Emotional and Academic Cheating**

Emotional intelligence is a key factor in the appearance of disruptive behaviours based on an emotional deficit. Students with low levels of Emotional intelligence show greater levels of impulsiveness and poorer interpersonal and social skills, all of which encourage the development of various antisocial behaviours (Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2004; Mestre, Guil, Lopes, Salovey & Gil-Olarte, 2006; Petrides et al., 2004). Some researchers suggest that people with lower emotional intelligence are more involved in antisocial behaviours (Trinidad, Unger, Chou & Johnson, 2005). Adolescents with a greater ability to manage their emotions are more able to cope with them in daily life, facilitating better psychological adjustment, and so they see no reason why they must cheat. Specifically, adolescents with a wider repertoire of affective competencies based on the understanding, management and regulation of their emotions, will develop sense of efficacy and will not require any assistance or external aid before they can confidently sit for any examination.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The inability of Nigerian educational system to translate the grand philosophy of education objectives into reality have been attributed to the problem of academic cheating. With the introduction of ICT, the frequency and intensity of cheating in this country is on the increase. Findings from the previous studies have not provided sufficient ground upon which the control of the act of cheating could be anchored. If the problem of academic cheating is not addressed now in this country, the dire consequence in the nearest future will be very severe as it will bring about subjective allocation of grades and sows the seeds of fraudulent and criminal value in the minds of our youths. This study therefore seeks to proffer psychological solution to the problem of academic cheating. Several researchers in the past have examined the relationships between cheating and emotional intelligence (Hassan 2008, Adelabi, 2008, Hassan & Ogunmakin, 2010). The present researcher observed that emotional intelligence made significant

contribution to the prediction of academic cheating in the previous studies. In view of the significant contribution of Emotional Intelligence to the prediction of academic cheating, no single study to the knowledge of this researcher, ever investigated the contribution of the components of Emotional Intelligence to the prediction of academic cheating.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study therefore is to examine the singular and combined contribution of the components (dimensions) of Emotional Intelligence to the prediction of potential for academic cheating, so as to know which of the components will be the best predictor of academic cheating.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were raised in pursuance of the study.

1. Will there be any relationship among the components of Emotional Intelligence (I.e. emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding and emotional management) and academic cheating?
2. What is the combined and singular contribution of the components of Emotional Intelligence (i.e. Emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding and emotional management) to the prediction of potential for academic cheating?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship among the components of Emotional Intelligence and potential for academic cheating.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant combined and singular contribution of the components of Emotional Intelligence to the prediction of potential of academic cheating.

### **Research Methodology**

**Design:** This study employed descriptive research design of the survey type. Emotional Intelligence and its components were the independent variables which academic cheating was the dependent variable.

**Sample and Sampling Technique:** A sample size of 180 (90 male, 90 female) Senior Secondary School 3 students were selected using a multi stage stratified random sampling technique. The first stage was the stratification of the entire geographical area of Ondo State has 3 senatorial districts. Simple random sampling technique was used to choose one local government from each senatorial district. The second stage involved the selection of 6 secondary schools from 3 local government areas selected. Stratified random sampling techniques was also used to select one or two schools from each of the local government area, such that one will be private and one will be public. The last stage involved the selection of 180 students from the selected secondary schools. Stratified random sampling technique was also used to select 30 students (15 males and 15 females) from each of the selected secondary schools.

### **Instrument**

The instrument administered to the respondents consisted of three elements each constituting a section. Section A consisted of items that measure the demographic data of the respondents. Such data include sex, age, and level of study. The remaining sections B to C contained the two validated instruments used to collect data on the predictor and criterion variables. These include:

1. Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by the researcher.
2. Potential for academic cheating scale adopted from Hassan (2004).

**Emotional Intelligence Scale** is a 16-item self report scale developed and validated by the researcher based on Salovey and Mayer (2004), four dimensional definition of Emotional Intelligence. It assesses Emotional Intelligence in four areas as follows:

- (a) Emotional perception(EP) – items 1 – 4
- (b) Emotional Integration (EI) – items 5 – 8
- (c) Emotional Understanding(EU) – items 9 -12
- (d) Emotional Management – items 13 – 16

The original draft of 50 items was later reduced to 16 items using factor loading analysis. The remaining items were administered concurrently with Law & Wong (2002) emotional scale on 30 students of Oroke High School Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. Using Pearson Product moment correlation, a correlation coefficient of 0.83 was obtained between the 2 scales. (0.62, 0.74, 0.81, 0.60) were also obtained as correlation coefficients for the subscales of these two measures. A two week test-retest form of reliability yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87 between the two-scales and (0.70, 0.72, 0.69, 0.85) between the subscales.

### **Potential for Academic Cheating Scale**

This scale was developed by Hassan (2004). It is a 25-item scale developed to assess individual's reaction to various aspects of examination. The scale had already been validated by Hassan, but the researcher later revalidated it by administering the scale concurrently with academic dishonesty scale developed by McCabe & Trevino (1997) on 30 students of Oroke High School Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. A correlation coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. To further ensure the consistency of the instrument, the test retest reliability of between two to four weeks inter-test interval ranged between 0.76 – 0.80.

### **Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings**

Data were collected using the 2 research instruments earlier mentioned. The researcher personally visited the sample schools to obtain permission from the principals for the inclusion and use of their schools and students for the study. Instruments were administered with the assistance of two trained field officers alongside the researcher and responses were collected back the same day. After thorough scoring of the responses, results are as shown in table 1 (see appendix)

Table 1 shows the correlation among the predictor variables and potential for academic cheating. It can be seen that there are large significant correlations among scores of the variables. Generally, emotional intelligence is also significantly correlated to the dependent variable: academic cheating ( $r = .68$ ). EP, EI, EU and EM are negatively correlated to PAC (respectively  $r = -.432, -.470, -.533, -.391$ ). Based on this result, hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

Table 2 (see appendix) shows the standard regression model with the potential for academic cheating as the dependent variable and the emotional intelligence as predictor variable. Collectively, in this regression model, emotional perception, emotional integration, emotional understanding and Emotional management accounted for 58.6% of the variance in academic cheating. However, only emotional perception, emotional understanding and emotional management emerged as significant predictors. The result shows that emotional management represents the most important role to reduce academic cheating ( $-0.462$ ). On the other hand, emotional understanding and emotional perception are also important to reduce academic cheating (respectively  $= -.367, = -.187$ ). Emotional integration cannot reduce academic cheating in this paper.

### **Discussion**

The present findings extend the past finding of research on emotional intelligence as psychological construct that can predispose an individual to engage in academic cheating. The findings of the present study indicated that academic cheating is negatively correlated with emotional intelligence and its components. The result further shows that Emotional Intelligence accounted for 53.6% of the total variance of academic cheating. This supports the earlier findings of (Adelabi, 2008, Hassan, 2008, Hassan & Ogunmakin 2010). Among the 4 components (dimension) of emotional intelligence investigated, emotional management was the highest predictor of potential for academic cheating followed by emotional understanding and emotional perception.

### **Conclusion**

Since it has been established from the findings of this study that emotional intelligence and its components made significant contribution to the prediction of academic cheating and, emotional management was the greatest predictor of academic cheating among the four components investigated, psycho-educational

therapy to teach all these skills should be inculcated into the curriculum of secondary school students with much emphasis on emotional management..School counselors should ensure its proper implementation.

### **Recommendations**

It is hereby recommended that future research can be based on the gender difference on the effects of the variables studies in the prediction of academic cheating. Test anxiety and Academic self-efficacy are two psychological variables investigated in the past that made significant contribution to the prediction of academic cheating, future researcher can also investigate the prediction of their components to the prediction of academic cheating.

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## Appendix

**Table 1: Correlation among the various variables of the study**

	PAC	EP	EI	EU	EM	EMI
PAC	1					
EP	-.432					
EI	-.470	-.611	1			
EU	-.533	-.576	.624	.724		
EM	-.371	-.473	.683	.526	1	
EMI	-.686	-.774	.786	.826	.728	1
	P < 0.01					

PAC = Potential for academic cheating; EP = Emotional perception; EI = Emotional integration; EU = Emotional understanding; EM = Emotional management; EMI = Emotional intelligence

**Table 2: Regression Analysis showing each dependent PAC variable with the emotional intelligence as predictor variables**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
				B	Std Error	Beta		
<b>(Constant)</b>				1.175	.226		4.506	00
Emotional perception				-.164	.080	-.187	-2.167	00
Emotional integration	.695	.586	.462	-.236	-.71	-.021	-2.429	00
Emotional understanding				+.216	.091	-.367	-3.512	00
Emotional management				-.025	.64	-.462	-3.16	00



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