

School Connectedness, Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control as Determinants of Academic Achievement among School Going Adolescents in Ikeja, Lagos State

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Abstract

This study investigated school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control as predictors of academic achievement among school going adolescents. The study made use of stratified random sampling in selecting 380 adolescents from twelve (12) secondary schools in Ikeja, Lagos State. The sample age ranged between 14 -18 years. Three instruments were used, namely: School Connected Scale, Emotional intelligence Scale, Locus of Control Scale. Achievement Scores were collected from their previous records. Data analysis involved the use of multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment correlation. The results indicated that the three independent variables as a block were effective in determining academic achievement of the adolescents. On the basis of the finding, it was suggested that school counsellors, psychologists should develop programmes to foster emotional intelligence as well as locus of control. The needs for guidance services in Nigerian secondary school were also discussed.

Keywords: School Connectedness, Emotional intelligence, Locus of control, School -going Adolescents, Academic achievement

Introduction

Academic achievement has become a serious phenomenon of interest to all and sundry and this account for the reason teachers, counsellors, examination bodies etc have been working hard to unravel the mystery behind recent poor academic performance in recent years in the country. Adeyemo (2007) indicated that Parents, guardians, teachers, institutions and society at large are concerned about how best to enhance academic standard and achievement. This is probably because educational attainment is highly fundamental to the realization of scientific and technological development, socio economic and political advancement and total life transformation of an individual.

Several researchers (e.g. Adeyemo, 2007; Adesemowo, 2005; Dike, 2007) have worked on factors affecting academic achievement using different statistical tools to arrive at probable solution to academic under-achievement for the realization of educational goals. It is the belief of the scholars and researchers that academic achievement would be improved upon if some factors were adequately addressed Aremu, (2002). Since achievement plays an important role in the lives and activities of human, it is necessary to investigate issues that surround it and provide how best to obtain this highly desired achievement. It is therefore pertinent to investigate school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control as determinants of academic achievement among school going adolescents in Ikeja, Lagos state.

School connectedness can be summarized as the extent to which students feel cared for in school and the extent to which students care about their school (Whitlock, 2006). School connectedness crosses cultural barriers and has been shown to have an impact on student success regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, or socioeconomic situation. There are a myriad of factors that contribute to feelings of connection, these include behavioural and academic expectations, a general feeling of belonging at school, acceptance of differences, perception of discipline, support from teachers, school climate, connection to peers, feeling safe at school, communication, school traditions, respect and school involvement, both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. There are also factors that are detrimental to the development of school connectedness, these issues are the lack of the presence of the factors that contribute to a positive school environment, specifically, peer harassment, physical aggression, relational aggression, students not liking school or not feeling supported or successful at school, violence, isolation, absenteeism, and students feeling unsafe at school.

Blum, (2005) demonstrates that nearly one half of all high school students feel disconnected from school and feel disenchanting with their school experiences. Factors that contribute to these feelings include isolation from peer group and feeling unsafe at school. Feeling connected to the primary learning environment is important at any school level, but it is especially important during adolescence. Given that so many changes are occurring within adolescents during these years, it is very important that other forces in their lives be stable so that they may have meaningful and educationally purposeful experiences. So much of adolescents' lives are spent in school, and, for many, much of their senses of self worth comes from their feelings about their success or lack thereof in the school setting. Students will carry forward what they learn during this time in their lives, so it is crucial to their development that they learn how to connect with others, that they are valuable and capable members of society and that they can be successful. Students who feel more connected to school tend to perform better in the classroom. Just as societal interactions impact the success of adults in the working world, the school atmosphere impacts students' ability to be academically successful. Booker (2004) states that "student academic achievement is a direct result of dynamic interactions occurring between individuals in their social contexts." In the case of students in school, the school setting is the social context. One's sense of self-worth has been shown repeatedly to have an effect on one's ability to be successful, and this is no different in the school setting. The school environment has an impact unmatched by any other on students' sense of belonging and, therefore, will affect their academic success.

In addition to impacting classroom performance, school connectedness also has an impact on other aspects of life including school behavior, attendance, and involvement, as well as potential to engage in behavior that may compromise one's health. Furthermore, the presence of physical aggression, relational aggression, and victimization in schools has also been linked to school connectedness and the higher the presence of these destructive forces, the lower the feelings of school connectedness (Wilson, 2004). Emotional intelligence is defined as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Mayer & Salovey, 1990). Simply stated, emotional intelligence is a learned ability to identify, understand, experience and express human emotions in healthy and productive ways. Emotional experience and expression are unique to each teacher and student.

It is a confluence of developed abilities to (1) know and value self (2) build and maintain a variety of strong, productive and healthy relationships (3) get along and work well with others in achieving positive results; (4) and effectively deal with the pressures and demands of daily life and work. The development of emotional intelligence is an intentional, active and engaging process. Affective learning requires a person-centered process for teacher and student growth and development. When emotional intelligence

skills are the focus of learning, teachers and students are building human development behaviours that are intricately related to the positive outcomes of achievement, goal achievement and personal well-being. Emotional intelligence has proven a better predictor of future success than traditional methods like the GPA, IQ, and standardized test scores. Hence, the great interest in emotional intelligence on the part of scholars, psychologists, educators, corporate bodies, and different institutions.

Farooq (2003) examined the effect of emotional intelligence on academic performance of 246 adolescent students and found that students with high emotional intelligence show better academic performance than the students with low emotional intelligence. Drago (2004) also examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement in non-traditional college students. Since students differed in cognitive ability, with some students being better prepared for the collegiate environment than others, the role of emotional intelligence in academic achievement must be better understood. Non-cognitive factors such as emotional intelligence may supplement or enhance student cognitive ability. In the study, emotional intelligence, achievement motivation, anxiety, and cognitive ability were predictor variables while the criterion variable was academic achievement as measured by student GPA. Results demonstrated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted student GPA scores, cognitive ability scores, and student age.

Mestre and others (2006) investigated in a sample of 127 Spanish adolescents, the ability to understand and manage emotions, assessed by a performance measure of emotional intelligence (the MSCEIT), correlated positively with teacher ratings of academic achievement and adaptation for both males and females. Among girls, these emotional abilities also correlated positively with peer friendship nominations. After controlling the IQ and the Big Five personality traits, the ability to understand and manage emotions remained significantly associated with teacher ratings of academic adaptation among boys and peer friendship nominations among girls. Self-perceived emotional intelligence was unrelated to these criteria. These findings provided partial support for hypotheses that emotional abilities are associated with indicators of social and academic adaptation to school.

Lastly, the study conducted by Yahaya and others (2011) investigated the relationship between the identified five dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely self-awareness, emotional management, self-motivation, empathy, interpersonal skills and academic performance. The purpose was to identify whether the five dimensions of emotional intelligence have been able to contribute to academic performance. Statistical inference of the Pearson-r and multiple regressions was used to analyze the data. The results showed that the significant relationship exists between self-awareness ($r = 0.21$), emotional management ($r = 0.21$) and empathy ($r = 0.21$) at the level of $p < 0.05$ and academic performance. Findings from multiple regression analysis (stepwise) showed that only three dimensions of emotional intelligence which is self-awareness ($\beta = 0.261$), self motivation ($\beta = -0.182$) and empathy ($\beta = 0.167$) accounted for 8.7% of variation in criterion (academic performance). Research also presented a model designed to reflect the relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence and academic performance.

These pattern of association observed between emotional intelligence and the academic achievement of the students is consistent with the position of Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, and Dornheim (1998); Tapia (1998); Ogundokun (2007); and Ogundokun and Adeyemo (2007) their positions point in the direction of significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement of students. But by contrast, Koifman (1998); Sutarso, Baggett, Sutarso and Tapia (1996) have shown no relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Hence, the need to examine the emotional intelligence as determinants of academic achievement among the school-going adolescents in Ikeja, Lagos State is important.

Locus of control is viewed as an important aspect of psychology developed by Julian Rotter in 1966. It is a generalized belief about the underlying causes of events of one's life. Individual has diverse belief about who controls his or her destiny. In other words, an individual's destiny could be controlled by oneself, fate, god or powerful others. Trylong (1987) gave a full name to the concept as 'Locus of control of reinforcement'. He tried to bridge the gap between behavioural and cognitive psychology. He is of the view that behaviour is guided largely by reinforcements which could be in form of rewards and punishments. Individual holds the belief about what causes their actions through contingencies such as rewards and punishments.

These beliefs give the kind of attitude people adopt towards an event. In other words, the locus of control has a correlational link with attitude. In the context of foreign language learning, learners hold different beliefs about their success or failure in the foreign language programme. A student who has a poor performance in a foreign language programme may ascribe his failure to the difficulty of the language, the attitude of the foreign language instructor, inadequacy in the teaching methods adopted by the foreign language instructor. These beliefs would invariably determine the locus of control of the learner.

Thus, Locus of control refers to an individual's generalized expectations concerning where control over subsequent events resides. In other words, who or what is responsible for what happens. It is analogous to, but distinct from, attributions. Locus of control is grounded in expectancy-value theory, which describes human behaviour as determined by the perceived likelihood of an event or outcome occurring contingent upon the behaviour in question, and the value placed on that event or outcome. More specifically, expectancy-value theory states that if (a) someone values a particular outcome and (b) that person believes that taking a particular action will produce that outcome, then (c) they are more likely to take that particular action.

Araromi (2010) divided locus of control into two non-dimensional units namely, internal locus of control and external locus of control. A learner who has an internal locus of control orientation believes that his or her behaviour is guided by his or her personal decisions and efforts while a learner with an external locus of control orientation believes that his or her behaviour is guided by fate, luck or external circumstances. Amadi (2010) is of the opinion that a more internal locus of control is generally seen as desirable.

Therefore, Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own behavior and actions. Those with a high external locus of control believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine events. Those with a high internal locus of control have better control of their behaviour, tend to exhibit more political behaviours, and are more likely to attempt to influence other people than those with a high external locus of control; they are more likely to assume that their efforts will be successful. They are more active in seeking information and knowledge concerning their situation (Araromi, 2010). Consequently, research has shown that having an internal locus of control is related to higher academic achievement (Amadi, 2010), students with internal locus of control earn better grades and work harder (Williams, 1990) and include spending more time on home work as well as studying longer for test. Hence, students with an internal locus of control have been found to do better in their studies (Trylong, 1987). When an individual believes that he can exert control over success in school, they are more likely to view school performance as a controllable outcome (Skinner, Wellborn & Connel, 1990). This implies that an individual who perceives himself as having no control over academic success and failures subsequently generate performance that serve to confirm their beliefs. It is also predicted that individuals who believe that academic outcomes are under their own personal control

would be more engaged in school and earn better grades and achievement scores. This is consistent with the findings of Nichollis (1984). The purpose of this study was to investigate school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control as determinants of academic achievement among school going adolescent in Ikeja, Lagos state.

Research Questions

- 1) What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control) as determinants of academic achievement among school going adolescents?
- 2) What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control) as determinants of academic achievement among school going adolescent?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. In this type of design, the researchers are interested in knowing the influence of the independent variables (school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control on the dependent variable (academic achievement) In this review so far, efforts have been made on what researchers have published on school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control, and how these could impact on academic achievement. It is the primary purpose of this study therefore to investigate the significant impact of these three constructs on academic achievement of school going adolescents in Ikeja, Lagos State. A total of 380 school going adolescents in senior secondary schools (Males=205 (53.9%) Females = 175, (46.1%) were randomly selected from twelve secondary schools in Ikeja Metropolis. The age of the respondents ranges between 14 and 18 years, with a mean age of 16.5 and SD of 2.7

School connectedness was measured with the School Connectedness Survey by Edens, (2006). The School Connectedness Survey assesses the degree to which students agree that at their school they feel close to people, happy, a part of the school, safe, and treated fairly. These are feelings and experiences that are likely to motivate students to attend and try hard in school. The scale thus serves as a measure of the level of student connectedness. The scale has 25 items to be responded to on a 5 – point structure response format. The response format ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The internal consistency of the scale was established by this study and it returned a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.88 Examples of the items include: ‘The teachers at this school treat students fairly’; ‘I feel my contributions to this school are valued’ and ‘I feel safe in this school’.

Emotional intelligence was measured with 33 items of (Schttle, Hggerty, Cooper, Golden & Dornheim, 1998). The scale is designed to measure an individual’s emotional intelligence through thirty three self-referencing statements tapping the appraisal and expression of emotions in self and other, emotional perception, regulating of self and others and emotional utilization. The participants are to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a 5 –point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument has demonstrated high internal consistency with Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.88.

The locus of control scale is an adoption of Rotter’s (1966) locus of control scale. The scale consists of twenty -nine items. Six of the items are fillers and the other twenty – three offer choice between internal and external control statements. A score of 35 and above denote external control while a score of between 1 -34 denote internal control. Apart from the validity and reliability of the scale by Rotter (1966), and Yoloje (1999) confirmed the reliability of 0.8 of the items. The internal consistency of the scale was re-established by this study and it returned a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.82. The questionnaires were

administered on the participants in their various schools following the approval of the school authorities. The administration of the instruments took two weeks. Also, as part of measure, data on academic achievement were collected from the schools' record of students' scores in English Language and Mathematics of the term preceding the administration of the questioner. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression to examine the predictive effects of school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control on the dependent variable (academic achievement). All analyses were determined at a significant level of 0.01

Results

Table 1: Regression summary table showing the joint effect of the independent variables on the academic achievement of the students

R = .608

$R^2 = .368$

Adj. $R^2 = .352$

Std. Error = 9.153

Source	Ss	Df	Ms	F	Sig
Regression	1025.910	2	372.82	5.865	.01
Residual	9822.570	377	2.63		
Total	10848.480	379			

Table 2: Relative contribution of the independent variables to academic achievement of the students

Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients beta	t	Sig.
School connectedness	.231	1.35	.321	42.8	.000
Emotional intelligence	.203	1.15	.290	36.4	.000
Locus of control	.228	1.29	.284	35.7	.001
(constant)	.862	2.154		101.03	.001

From table 1, it was found that the linear combination of school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control had significant effect on the academic achievement of the respondents. The regression analysis had R^2 of 0.368 and adjusted R^2 of 0.352 which is statistically translated to mean 35 percent contribution of the total variance to academic achievement of the participant. The analysis of variance on the combined effect of the predictors (school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control) yielded F of 5.865 at 0.01 significant levels.

Table 2 shows for each independent variable, the unstandardized regression weight (β), the standard error of estimate ($SE\beta$), the standardized coefficient, the t-ratio and level at which the T-ratio is significant. School connectedness made the highest contribution ($\beta = .32$, $t = 42.8$, $P > 0.05$). This is followed by

emotional intelligence which contributed ($\beta = .29, t = 36.4, P > 0.05$) and then locus of control ($\beta = .28, t = 35.4, P > 0.05$).

Discussion

The Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis computed for the research questions indicate that school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control had significant relative and joint interactions with the dependent variable (academic achievement). Contingent upon these findings, it is clear crystal clear that adolescent's academic achievement could be improved upon if the three investigated predictors are worked upon among the students. The finding that school connectedness is a good predictor of academic achievement confirmed the assertion of Eisenberg, Neumark-Stainer, & Perry (2003) when they reported that adolescents who experience maltreatment from their peers at school are less likely to want to be in school, and therefore less likely to experience school connectedness. If students do not feel safe at school, they will not feel connected to the school, and this will lower the likelihood that they will be able to focus or be engaged in the learning process and this will consequently affect their academic success.

Also, the assertion that emotional intelligence predicts academic achievement could be supported by the findings of Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, and Dornheim (1998); Tapia (1998); Ogundokun (2007); and Ogundokun and Adeyemo (2010). Lastly, Odinko and Adeyemo (1999) also discovered in their study that internal locus of control is significant to academic achievement.

Implication and recommendation

The study has shown that school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control are predictors of academic achievement among secondary school adolescents in Ikeja, Lagos State. In view of this, it is hereby recommended that educational stakeholders as a matter of urgency should encourage the establishment of emotional intelligence training programs in the school setting. Also, training aimed at increasing adolescents' feelings of connection to their schools in order to promote positive academic outcomes should be established. Lastly counselling psychologists should work on the emotional well-being of students in the school.

Limitation and future directions

The study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the study is only limited to three psychological factors (school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control) other factors like personal and sociological were not included and could be consider in extending the frontier of knowledge. Another limitation of the study derives from the sample. Although the sample size for the study was relatively large enough, the facts still remain that it did not represent the totality of students in the senior secondary school students in Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria. Thus, a note of caution needs to be sounded when generalizing the results of the study.

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