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Enhancing Peacebuilding Skills among Secondary School Students: An Empirical Assessment of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of emotional intelligence training in enhancing peacebuilding skills of secondary schools students in Ogun East Senatorial District of Ogun State, Nigeria. A pre- and post-test experimental-control group design was employed for the study. Gender which was used as a moderator variable was considered at 2 levels along with one (1) experimental and one (1) control groups. The study participants were one hundred and forty-four (144) Senior Secondary students randomly selected from 2 chosen public secondary schools in Ogun East Senatorial District of Ogun State. One standardized instrument was used in collecting data while analysis of covariance and t-test statistical methods were used to analyze the generated data. Emotional intelligence training programme was effective in fostering peacebuilding skills among secondary school students. The study further revealed that gender had no significant effect on students' peacebuilding skills. Based on the findings, it was recommended that school psychologists are expected to incorporate the contents of emotional learning competencies into the training programmes in the schools. This will not only enhance positive outcomes but could also foster coping skills of students and other school members.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence training, peacebuilding skills, secondary schools students, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Human beings are social specie. As they interact daily – in the workplace, at schools, at home and in the marketplace – they exhibit differing opinions, values, needs, interests, concerns and beliefs. The basic characteristics common to all human beings are interaction, interrelationship and interdependence within the environment they live. The nature and environment in which we live, to a large extent, determines the intensiveness and extensiveness of our interaction and interrelationship (Ayodele, 2014; Lichtenstein, 2000). These differences in human orientation to life and living, quite often, lead to disagreement, hence conflict arises. Conflict is a daily occurrence among human beings and presumably a natural part of human existence. Conflict will continue to occur as far as there is interaction among human beings. Hammed (2003) observes "the greater the interpersonal interactions, the more a person becomes more human, better adjusted, and more exposed to increasing number of conflicts".

We experience and express emotions throughout our daily lives. Our emotional state at any given moment influences perception, cognition motivation, decision making, and interpersonal judgments (Erber, 1991; Forgas, 1995; Zajonc & Mclntocsh, 1992). One way of understanding human is through becoming emotionally intelligent. The scientific study of emotional intelligence (EI) in organisations has gained considerable research activity over recent years (Ashkanasy, 2002; Brown, 2003; Chan, 2006; Donaldson-Feilder & Bond, 2004; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Fulmer & Barry, 2004). EI has been the subject of much attention at both popular and academic level (Pérez, Petrides & Furnham, 2005).

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) define the concept of EI as the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. EI includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions in order to assist thoughts, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer *et al.*, 2004).

EI refers specifically to the co-operative combination of intelligence and emotion (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Roberts, Zeidner & Matthews, 2001). EI emphasises the importance of self-awareness and understanding, redressing a perceived imbalance between intellect and emotion in the life of the collective Western mind (Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2008). Zeidner *et al.* (2008) further state that EI also connects with several cutting-edge areas of psychological science, including the neuroscience of emotion, self-regulation theory, studies of meta-cognition, and the search for human cognitive abilities beyond 'traditional' academic intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the basis for personal qualities such as realistic self-confidence, personal integrity, knowledge of personal strength and weaknesses, resilience in times of change or adversity, self-motivation, perseverance; and the knack for getting on well with others (Akinboye, 2003). Lopes, Cote, and Salovey (2006) posit that EI help people to broaden their repertoire of coping strategies and try out new ways of handling emotionally charged situations and it may be a good way to enhance emotional management skills. This might involve discussing coping strategies and ways to handle particular situations to raise awareness about alternative strategies.

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Emotional intelligence is said to differ from cognitive ability and to be associated with enhanced performance in the workplace (Brackett & Salovey, 2006; Bradberry & Su, 2006; Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey, 2006) Research has been devoted to studying the ability to predict achievement with emotional intelligence (e.g., Barchard, 2003; Parker, Creque, Barnhart, Harris, Majeski, Wood, Bond, & Hogan, 2004), and Van der Zee, Thijs and Schakel (2002) concluded that emotional intelligence is able to predict both academic and social success better than traditional measures of academic intelligence and personality.

Tapia and Marsh (2006) found that females scored higher than males on emotional intelligence, especially on empathy and handling relationships. Males and females differ significantly in emotional intelligence or in some constructs in the EII, high scores in the EII correspond to high scores on the EIS. The advantages of the EII may lie in the existence of the subscales.

This 'turning off or turning out' of the normal emotional responses to violent events, may also signify lack of emotional 'self-awareness' and understanding of other's feelings, concerns and needs that is ascribed as 'empathy' in emotional and social intelligence (Goleman 1995; Bar-on 1997). Being emotionally self- aware, implies being aware of, understanding and sensitive to one's own feelings and being empathic is being sensitive to other's feelings, to be able to emotionally read other people and show interest, care and concern for them (Bar-On 1997).

Parnes (1984) cited by Animashaun (2002) investigated the effects of two methods, incubation and stimulation, in generating creative ideas. Parnes's and his colleagues at CEF developed and pioneered the creative problem solving (CPS) process. CPS is an open free flowing thinking method that oscillates between divergence and convergence modes of thinking. The divergence modes are used to generate as many alternating ideas as while the convergence modes are used to prune down the ideas. Parnes's reported that the two methods are very efficient in generating new ideas.

Costa, Terraciano, & McCrae (2001) analysed gender differences in openness to experience based on a secondary analysis of 23,031 people from 26 cultures. They analysed different components of openness to experience and found that women scored higher than men on openness to Aesthetics, feelings and actions. Men scored higher than women on openness to ideas. There were no differences on openness to fantasy or values. Misra (2003) studied 156 Indian students and also found higher openness scores in female. Other studies found no differences in openness to experience, (Hastian & Farrel (2001; Harris, 2004).
Several studies on emotional intelligence in Nigeria have concentrated on the use of these techniques in fostering creativity among secondary school students Akinboye (1976); colleges of education students (Owolabi, 1988); post-graduate students in business Administration (Olagunju ,1990) and prisons inmates Animashaun (2002), whereas little or none has contribution to the field of peacebuilding. More importantly, most of the researches and findings on emotional intelligence have been done using participants from Western and Asian countries and there is dearth of their use in Africa and indeed Nigeria especially in conflict transformation processes.

Research Hypotheses
There is no significant effect of emotional intelligence training on participants' peace-building skills.
There is no significant gender difference in effects of emotional intelligence training on participants' peace-building skills.

Methodology
Research Design: The study adopted a pre-test, post-test quasi experimental design to investigate the effects of emotional intelligence training on peace-building skills of participants.
Population: The population of the study consisted of the entire senior secondary school students in the public secondary schools in Ogun East Senatorial District of Ogun State, Nigeria. The Senatorial district has nine Local Government Areas. These are: Ijebu East, Ijebu North, Ijebu North East, Ijebu-Ode, Ikenne, Odogbolu, Ogun Waterside, Remo North and Sagamu Local Government Areas
Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample for the study comprised two hundred and sixteen participants. The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. Two public Senior Secondary Schools were selected from 2 Local Government Areas. Seventy-two (72) students (36 males and 36 females) were randomly selected in each school to participate in the study making a total of 144 in all. Sampling was done through a simple random procedure.
Instrumentation: This study made use of one instrument. This instrument was used to obtain information concerning the dependent variable (peace-building skills). The demographic section of the scale was used for gender identification.
Peace-building Scale – Peacebuilding was measured with a 23-item self-designed peacebuilding scale. The scale measured the three factors of: reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation. Each of the twenty-three

items was rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 4 (agree strongly). Samples of the items included: "I quickly come to terms with agreement", "I get concerned when situation before the conflict cannot be maintained." and "I feel fulfilled after conflict resolution." 36 items were initially generated. The items were subjected to factor analysis to establish the psychometric properties. The process led to the removal of thirteen items having negative outcomes and those with double loading, leaving only twenty three items that eventually made up the scale. Estimation of the test–retest reliability for the Peacebuilding Scale, with four weeks interval, yielded an index of .76.

Procedure

The study was simultaneously carried out in three phases at the two locations of the participants – Sagamu and Ijebu East Local Government Areas of Ogun State.

Phase One: Pre-training visits were made to the three schools where the training programmes were held. Approval was sought from the authorities of the schools where the participants were drawn for the trainings. Copies of the scales and the treatment packages were taken to school management for clarifications and comments. During this phase of the work, an introductory meeting was arranged with the would-be participants from each of the three schools to familiarize them with objectives and mission of the researcher and the derivable benefits for the individual participants and the schools at large. Days and time of meeting were agreed upon. Participants were assigned to treatment and control groups at this phase. This was done through simple random sampling technique, specifically the random-alphabet. The pre-test was carried out at this phase. The pre-treatment test was administered, using the scale (peacebuilding scale) for data collection. Scores obtained served as the pre-treatment scores.

Phase Two (Treatment Sessions): The treatment package was employed during this phase of the study. Participants assigned to the treatment group were exposed to the intervention programme, while the control group received placebo treatment. The researcher had eight sessions with both the experimental group (where the treatment package were taught) and also with the control group where the participants were taught Microsoft words.

Phase Three (Evaluation of Treatment Programmes): This phase concentrated on the evaluation of the effects of the intervention package and the outcome of the study generally. A post-test was carried out to determine the results. After the completion of the programme at the eighth week, the peacebuilding scale was re-administered on participants in the treatment and control groups to determine the effectiveness of the treatment packages.

Intervention Package: Emotional Intelligence Group

Session 1: Selection process, general orientation for the participants and administration of
pre-test to collect the baseline data against which the post-treatment data would be compared.

Session 2: Introduction of basic terms and concepts of programme.

Session 3: Identification of participants' problems.

Session 4: Maintenance of problems or disturbed condition.

Session 5: Application of Treatment.

Session 6: Application of Treatment.

Session 7: Concretization of the benefits of the Emotional Intelligence programme for
enhanced peacebuilding skills.

Session 8: Wrap-up and post-test administration.

Method of Analysis

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and t-test statistics were adopted to analyze data generated and to test the hypothesis at 0.05 significant level. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized to investigate the joint effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Results

Table 1 shown below revealed that participants in the emotional intelligence group had a mean score of 68.386 and a standard error of 1.057. Participants in the control group had a mean score of 65.486 and a standard error of 1.357. This finding implies that the intelligence group had a higher mean compared to the mean that was obtained by the control group

Table 1: Estimates of effect of emotional intelligence training programme in enhancing participants' peacebuilding skills

Treatment Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	65.486[a]	1.357	62.810	68.162
Emotional Intelligence	68.386[a]	1.057	66.303	70.470

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pretest Peace Building = 66.3102.

Table 2 revealed that there was significant effect of emotional intelligence training programme on students' peacebuilding skills ($F_{(1,140)}$ = 4.021; $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected by this finding. The implication of this finding is that students' peacebuilding skills was fostered with regards to the treatment given to them.

Table 2: Univariates test of effect of emotional intelligence training programme in enhancing participants' peacebuilding skills

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Contrast	401.218	1	200.609	4.021	.001
Error	6933.876	140	49.884		

The F tests the effect of Treatment Group. This test is based on the linearly independent pairwise comparisons among the estimated marginal means.

The results in Table 3 revealed that there was no significant two-way interaction effects of treatment and gender ($F_{(1,139)}$ = 1.287; $p > 0.05$) on students' peacebuilding skills. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the effect of gender on the effectiveness of the treatment in enhancing students' peacebuilding skills was accepted by this finding. The implication of the results is that gender would not interact significantly with treatment to affect the peacebuilding skills of participants. The results in Table 3 showed that female participants in the treatment group and the control group had higher peacebuilding mean scores (emotional intelligence = MD 69.537; Standard error 1.507) and (control = MD 67.672; Standard error 1.471) respectively. Their male counterparts however had lower mean scores in the peacebuilding skills. Thus is recorded as follows: (emotional intelligence = MD 67.537; Standard error 1.496) and (control = MD 63.300; Standard error 2.282). The differences in mean scores did not translate to any significant effects of the interaction between treatment and gender.

Table 3: Estimates of the interaction effect of treatment and gender on participants' peacebuilding skills

Treatment Group	Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	Male	63.300[a]	2.282	58.801	67.799
	Female	67.672[a]	1.471	64.772	70.573
Emotional Intelligence	Male	67.537[a]	1.496	64.587	70.487
	Female	69.236[a]	1.507	66.265	72.206

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pretest Peace Building = 66.3102.

Discussion of the Findings

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant effect of emotional intelligence training on participants' peace-building skills. The findings of this study did not support this hypothesis. Therefore the hypothesis was rejected. The results revealed that participants in the treatment group demonstrated enhanced capacity in peacebuilding than their counterparts in the control group. This was reflected in the increase in the post-test peacebuilding scores of the participants. The superior capacity displayed by the treated participants over the control could be attributed to the eight-week treatments they were exposed to. It was not surprising however

that emotional intelligence made this fruitful impact on participants' level of peacebuilding as previous investigations have reported their potency.

The results was consistent with the findings of previous studies (Azeez, 2012; Bailey, Murphy & Porock, 2011; Iro-Idoro, 2014; Ogunyemi & Mabekoje, 2007; Vitello-Cicciu, 2002) which established that human behaviour, achievement, caring and performance at the workplace and academics could be fostered through emotional intelligence training. The treatment package has been applied in previous studies and result showing its effectiveness in enhancing human accomplishment, the present study tried it too and also has established its effects on the peacebuilding skills of the participants.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant gender difference in the effects of emotional intelligence training on participants' peace-building skills. The result revealed that there was no significant two-way interaction effect of treatment and gender on students' peacebuilding skills; therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. The finding agreed with ample research evidence (Akpochafo, 2011; Aremu & Tejumola, 2008) that has shown gender would not interact with treatment to influence behaviour, particularly in emotional intelligence. In fact, a substantial body of evidence indicated that males and females perform at similar levels of tests designed to measure emotional competencies (Adekola, 2012; Baker & Rudd, 2001; Ogunyemi, 2010).

Conclusion

This study has provided meaningful insight into the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training programme in enhancing peacebuilding skills of secondary schools students in Ogun East Senatorial District of Ogun State, Nigeria. It also showed the potency of the technique in enhancing students' peacebuilding skills. It is concluded that participants' peacebuilding skills improved significantly as a result of the treatment. The study further revealed that gender had no significant effect on students' peacebuilding skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is advocated that emotional intelligence can be mainstreamed into peace education. Vast literature exists on the fact that human behaviour and achievements are directly influenced by their levels of creative and emotional competencies, therefore school administrators should, as a matter of urgency, introduce these variables to the staffers and students in order to nurture peacebuilding among stakeholders in the school setting.

The efficacy of the independent variable has shown that students could best handle conflict if these skills are taught to them. Therefore, school psychologists are expected to incorporate the contents of emotional learning competencies into the training programmes in the schools. This will not only enhance positive outcomes but could also foster coping skills of students and other school members. It is also worthwhile to include emotional intelligence skills in training courses for peace educators. It is also important that academics intensify research activities in the area of peacebuilding as there is dearth of work in that field in Nigeria.

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