

Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Attitude Towards Examination of Undergraduates at University of Ilorin

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Abstract - Emotional intelligence is the basic construct out of which all motivation arises. People with high emotional intelligence have the characteristic of motivating themselves. Students differ in cognitive abilities, with some students being better prepared for the university environment than others. As such, scholars have attempted to find out if emotional intelligence determines students' attitude toward their studies. The present study therefore, investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates' at the University of Ilorin. Correlational survey method was employed for the study. The study showed that there is low level of emotional intelligence among University of Ilorin undergraduates. Majority of the respondents have negative attitude towards examination. The result revealed that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination. Also, it revealed that emotional intelligence has significant correlation with gender ($r = 0.203$, $p < 0.05$), which implies that gender plays a significant role in the emotional intelligence of undergraduates. Emotional intelligence also has a correlation with age ($r = 0.073$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that age of undergraduates also plays a significant role in their emotional intelligence. Attitude towards examination had a correlation with age ($r = 0.086$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that age of the undergraduates plays a significant role in influencing an individual's attitude toward examinations. Based on these findings, it was recommended; among others, that counsellors and lecturers assist students in determining the appropriate emotional intelligence as this would help them to develop positive attitude towards examination.

Keywords: Attitude towards Examination, Emotional Intelligence, Undergraduates, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

INTRODUCTION

Examination is an assessment of a person's capabilities, skills and potentials along diverse dimensions in order to make a particular judgement. According to Longe and Ajike [1], an examination or test is an assessment intended to measure the test taker's knowledge or commitment to a cause. In this perspective, examination is used to assess students' comprehension and assimilation of intellectual substance purveyed to them. It is therefore expected that a student's attitude towards examinations is vital in fulfilling examination objectives.

Attitude is a terminology that often invokes ambiguity; hence, it has no universally accepted definition. In fact, 30 definitions of attitude have been described over the years [2]. In this study, attitude is considered as a learned enduring system of positive and negative evolutions, emotional feelings, and pro or con action tendency with respect to a social object. Students' attitude towards examinations, on the other hand, could be described as learned enduring system of positive and negative evolutions, emotional feelings, and pro or con action tendency with respect to scholastic summative evaluation.

With the foregoing on students' attitude towards examination, a positive affect is expected since examination is an unavoidable end of institutionalised learning. So, apart from the endless round of assignments and the continuous assessment tests which undergraduate students have to cope with, they are confronted at the end of each semester in a session with a major internal examination. To this, Longe and Ajike [1] observed that the truth remains, however, that up till now, no unexceptionable alternative means of measuring academic competence has been devised. It is worthy of note that an examination may be administered formally or informally. An example of an informal examination would be a reading test administered by a parent to a child while formal examinations often produce grades or scores. The formal examination is any test that is constructed, administered and scored in a particular fashion in order to safeguard its credibility and authenticity. A formal examination, whether internal or external, exerts its psychology on the students [1]. It is worthy of note that while examination remains a consistent unavoidable design for predicting, diagnosing and promoting studentship, the predisposition of students towards examination is worrisome. This is further exacerbated with the popular cliché that examination is not a true test of a ward's ability. This is because attitudes enable people to interpret and respond to the environment [3].

Unfortunately, one pervading consequence of negative attitude towards examination is poor academic performance with numerous implications and the enormity of its effect on the students, the family, the school, the society and the nation [4], [5], [6], [7]. In pre-requisite examinations for admittance into higher institutions such as West African School Certificate Examinations Council (WASCE), students' performance has not improved in the past decade as reflected in the Chief Examination Officer's annual report of West African Examinations Council (WAEC) from 2005 to 2014. For instance, in the May/June 2012/2013 results released, out of 324,998 candidates that sat for the examinations, only 62,295 candidates, representing 20.04%, obtained credit passes and above in English Language and Mathematics, and in at least three other subjects [8]. The poor state of results is not limited to WAEC. The results of the May/June 2009 examination conducted by the National Examinations Council (NECO) for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Students Examination followed a similar pattern. The 2009

NECO results were adjudged the worst ever conducted by the examination body [10]. A comprehensive result released by NECO at its headquarters in Minna, Niger State in September 2009, showed that out of the total candidates entry of 1,184,907, only 126,500 passed with five credits including English language and Mathematics. This is less than 11% of the total candidates who sat for the examination [10]. The 2010 performance showed that out of 1,132,357 candidates that sat for the examination, only 283,089 candidates, amounting to 25% passed with five credits including English language and Mathematics; 43% of the number of candidates that sat for the examination passed at credit level in Biology. This means that over 60% of the 1,132,357 candidates that sat for the examination would not gain admission into any Nigerian University based on admission requirements [10].

Academic performance of University students is rarely documented in scholastic researches; however, the recent commentary where Nigerian graduates are being referred to as "half-baked" aptly captures students' attitude to learning and evaluation. There are undocumented reports of First Class graduates of Nigerian Universities who find it difficult to spell words correctly, write legibly or transform learned theories to practical productivity. As noted by Agokei [11], only about 10% of an estimated 170,000 graduates annually from Nigerian Universities and Polytechnics get meaningfully employed with the rest either underemployed or are unemployable.

One particular study that has discussed student attitudes towards social influences that can impact student outcomes was that of Kelly, Lavergne, Boone and Boone [12]. This study examined 280 different students' attitudes towards certain social factors that either strongly encouraged their persistence through their educational studies or factors that discouraged their participation and desire to persist through their educational programmes. Kelly, Lavergne, Boone and Boone's [12] findings stated that students are more likely to succeed and continue within the institution when they find themselves in settings that provide needed academic and social support.

Several individual difference variables predict attitude certainty, including need for cognition [13]. Specifically, those higher in need for cognition, closure, and certainty orientation tend to be more certain of their attitudes. Although each of these many predictors affect the degree of certainty a person has in his or her attitude, researchers show interest in

attitude because it has implications for the attitude's likelihood of guiding behaviour and withstanding the effects of both time and direct attempts at persuasion. Hence, while becoming more aware of influences that impact student outcomes which are very useful and important, one should also note the influences that positively impact students' attitude towards examination. Emotional intelligence seems to be one of such variables and is thus subject of investigation in this study.

One area of research that has involved significant and heated debate is the definition of the construct "emotional intelligence" [14], [15]. Emotional Intelligence is seen as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions; to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions [16]. Bar-On [17] has further broadened Emotional Intelligence to encompass a set of personality attributes, including achievement motivation.

Based on this, the researchers investigated the degree and nature of relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination. This enables the researchers to ascertain the extent to which variation in one variable is related to variations in the other variable.

Problem

Students' attitude towards examination has been discussed as relevant for success in life, since examination is an unavoidable end to educational training. Unfavourable or negative attitudes are usually associated with avoidance and rejection, while positive attitudes are associated with broader acceptance and comparatively more positive or favorable reactions. In this light, it is observed that the attitude of students towards examinations may not be favourable or positive. This is observed with the continuous occurrence of examination dishonesty and malpractice, popularly known as cheating and lack of preparedness for examinations as well as a resulting failing performance.

Thus, poor students' attitude towards examination has been a vice that has encouraged bedeviling values in the Nigerian education system for many years. This problem does not only occur in primary schools, but also in secondary and tertiary institutions with the enormity of this challenge falling not only on the students but also on their families, the school, the society and the nation. While prior attempts in ameliorating these perceived challenges have raised

more questions than answers, little or nothing is known on the linkage between emotional intelligence and undergraduates' attitude towards examination.

The concept of emotional intelligence was introduced by Salovey and Mayer [18] which combines cognition, emotion, and intelligence. Emotional intelligence consist of dispositional attributes for monitoring one's own and others' feelings, beliefs, and internal states in order to provide useful information to guide one's and others' thinking and action [19], [20].

Salami [21] investigated how emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being contribute to students' behaviours and attitudes. Two hundred and forty-two students from a college of education, in Kwara State, Nigeria responded to a set of questionnaires consisting of measures of emotional intelligence (EI), self-efficacy, psychological well-being (i.e. happiness, life satisfaction and depression) and students' behaviours and attitudes. Hierarchical regression analyses conducted for each dependent variable showed that emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, happiness and life satisfaction over and above depression predicted students' behaviours and attitudes.

Odedokun [22] investigated school connectedness, emotional intelligence and locus of control as predictors of academic achievement among school going adolescents. The study made use of 380 adolescents from twelve (12) secondary schools in Ikeja, Lagos State. The sample age was between 14 and 18 years. The findings showed that the three independent variables as a block were effective in determining academic achievement of the adolescents.

However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, no previous research has investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. This is the gap that this study fills.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were raised based on the problem:

1. What is the level of emotional intelligence of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin?
2. What is the attitude of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin towards examination?

3. Is there any relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin?
4. Is there any relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the emotional intelligence of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin?
5. Is there any relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the attitude of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin towards examination?

Research Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were generated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin.
2. There is no significant relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the emotional intelligence of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin.
3. There is no significant relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the attitude of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin towards examination.

METHODS

The research design that was adopted for this study is the quantitative research correlational survey method. According to Stangor [23], correlational design is appropriate for measuring such complexities of the pattern of relationships that exist among measured variables. Correlational research design is preferred for this study because it is capable of determining the relationship(s) between or among two or more variables.

The population comprised all undergraduates of the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, which is 32,504 [24]. The target population consists of all 100 and 200 level undergraduates admitted through Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations (UTME) and Direct Entry. This class of students were chosen because they have just gained admission into the university and are likely to have attitudes toward examinations different from 300 and 400 level students who might have already adjusted and are familiar with the examination processes in the institution. Based on the Research Advisors [25], a total sample size of 381 is recommended for this population at 95% confidence and 5% margin of error.

The researchers, however, decided to increase the sample size to 400 for convenience. Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were employed to select four hundred respondents.

A questionnaire was used to gather necessary data. It consists of two scales: Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and Attitude Towards Examination Scale (ATES). Both scales were appropriately validated. Section A of the questionnaire seeks to elicit personal data (gender and age) of the respondents; Section B made up of sixteen items seeks information on the emotional intelligence of the respondents while Section C contains twenty items on the respondents' attitude towards examination. The respondents were allowed to ask questions to clarify the questionnaire items from the researchers. No time was set for the completion of instrument and no confidential items like names, addresses of respondents were asked. Respondents responded to all items with utmost honesty. They were assured of the confidentiality with which the information obtained was treated.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Percentages were used for the personal data section while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation tool was employed to test hypothesis 1 and multiple regression (correlation matrix) was used to test hypotheses 2 and 3.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of data obtained from the respondents in frequency counts and percentages.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	f	%
Male	212	53.0
Female	188	47.0
Total	400	100.0

The table indicates that 400 respondents participated in the study, out of which 212 (53.0%) are males, while 188 (47.0%) are females.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	f	%
Below 20 years	246	61.5
21 years and above	154	38.5
Total	400	100.0

Table 2 indicates that 246 (61.5%) respondents are below 20 years while 154 (38.5%) are 21 years and above.

Table 3. Emotional Intelligence Level of Undergraduate Students at the University of Ilorin

Emotional Intelligence Level	f	%
High	46	11.5
Low	354	88.5
Total	400	100.0

Table 3 shows that 46 (11.5%) of the respondents have high emotional intelligence, while 354 (88.5%) have low emotional intelligence level.

Table 4. Attitude of Undergraduates at the University of Ilorin Towards Examination

Attitude Toward Examination	f	%
Positive	128	32.0
Negative	272	68.0
Total	400	100.0

Table 4 shows that 128 (32.0%) of the respondents have positive attitude toward examinations, while 272 (68.0%) have negative attitude toward examinations.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates' at the University of Ilorin*

Table 5. Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Attitude Towards Examination of Undergraduates at the University of Ilorin

Correlation	Mean	SD	Cal. r-value	p-value	r-value
Emotional Intelligence	44.02	7.31			
Attitude Towards Examination	62.29	5.73	0.26*	0.01	0.19

*Significant, $p < 0.05$; $df = 398$

The result in table 5 indicates that the calculated r-value is 0.26 while the critical r-value is 0.19. Since the calculated r-value is greater than the critical r-value, there is a significant relationship. Hence, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the*

emotional intelligence of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin.

Table 6: Summary of Correlation Matrix showing the Relationship between the moderating and independent variables among Respondents

Variable	1 Gender	2 Age	3 EI
Gender	1.000		
Age	0.142*	1.000	
Emotional Intelligence	0.203*	0.073*	1.000

The result in table 6 shows the correlation matrix between the moderating and independent variable of the respondents. It reveals that emotional intelligence has significant correlation with gender ($r = 0.203$, $p < 0.05$) which implies that gender plays a significant role in the emotional intelligence of undergraduate students. Emotional intelligence has a correlation with age ($r = 0.073$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that age of undergraduates' students also plays a significant role in their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence also has a significant correlation with age and gender ($r = 0.142$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, gender and age of the undergraduates play a significant role on the respondents' emotional intelligence. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant relationship between gender age as predisposing factors to the attitude of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin towards examination.*

Table 7: Summary of Correlation Matrix showing the Relationship between the moderating and dependent variables among Respondents

Variable	1 Gender	2 Age	3 ATES
Gender	1.000		
Age	0.142*	1.000	
Attitude Towards Examination	0.043	0.086*	1.000

The result from table 7 shows the correlation matrix between the moderating and dependent variables among respondents. It reveals that attitude towards examination does not have a significant correlation with gender ($r = 0.043$, $p > 0.05$) which implies that an individual's gender does not have a significant role to play in influencing attitude towards examination. Attitude towards examination has a

correlation with age ($r = 0.086$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that age of the undergraduate students plays a significant role in influencing an individual's attitude toward examinations. Attitude towards examination also has a significant correlation with age and gender ($r = 0.142$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The main focus of this research was to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. Four hundred undergraduates of University of Ilorin participated in the study: 212 (53.0%) of them were males while 188 (47.0%) were females; 246 (61.5%) of them were below 20 years of age while 154 (38.5%) were 21 years and above.

The profiling on the level of emotional intelligence of undergraduates in University of Ilorin showed that the respondents have a low level of emotional intelligence. This finding agrees with Gyanani and Kushwaha [26] who stated that low level of emotional intelligence affect students' attitude to learning and examinations. Kusche and Greenberg [27] are of the opinion that emotions are critical ingredients for motivation. Behnke [28] asserted that an individual's emotional intelligence directly influences his/her attitude towards examination.

The profiling on the attitude of undergraduates towards examination indicated that majority of the respondents have negative attitude towards examination. In a more recent meta-analysis, Crede and Kuncel [29] found that non-cognitive factors like study habits, skill and study motivation, among other attitudinal constructs, accounted for incremental variance in academic performance beyond standardized tests and previous grades. Moreover, a literature review by Nagaraju [30] pointed out that for good academic success, good study habits and attitudes are important.

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. The result indicated that the calculated r -value is 0.26 while the critical r -value is 0.19. Since the calculated r -value is greater than the critical r -value, there is a significant relationship. Hence, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination among undergraduates at the University of Ilorin was

rejected. This finding agrees with that of Sabath [31] who observed that emotional intelligence is the basic construct out of which all attitudes, belief and motivations arise. People with high emotional intelligence have the characteristic of developing a high attitude and thus motivating oneself towards achieving a set goal [18]. According to Behnke [28], emotional intelligence directly influences motivation; and when motivation is high, it will lead to developing a positive attitude to learning and achievement.

Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the emotional intelligence of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. The result showed that emotional intelligence had significant correlation with gender ($r = 0.203$, $p < 0.05$) which implies that gender plays a significant role on emotional intelligence of undergraduate students. Emotional intelligence also has a correlation with age ($r = 0.073$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that age of undergraduate students also plays a significant role on their emotional intelligence. This implies that gender and age of the undergraduate students play a significant role in the development of the respondents' emotional intelligence. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. This finding does not agree with Onuka and Durowoju [32] who investigated emotional intelligence, motivation and gender as determinants of achievement in senior secondary school economics in Ibadan North LGA, Nigeria. The findings showed that high emotional intelligence and motivation are positively related to students' cognitive achievement; but gender has no significant effect on students' cognitive achievement in economics as well as their emotional intelligence. The findings also showed that there was no significant difference in the cognitive achievement in economics on gender basis.

Hypothesis three stated that there is no significant relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the attitude of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin towards examination. The result revealed that attitude towards examination does not have a significant correlation with gender ($r = 0.043$, $p > 0.05$) which implies that an individual's gender does not have a significant role to play in influencing attitude towards examination. Attitude towards examination had a correlation with age ($r = 0.086$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that age of undergraduates plays a significant role in influencing an individual's attitude toward examinations. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. This finding agrees with that of Macaluso [33] and Goleman [34] who stated that

people's emotions are not self-contained phenomena. An individual's emotional mood affects the mood towards the school as well as attitude towards school activities such as examination. Age was found to be a significant factor in learning as well as preparation for examination. In most cases, age is an index of maturity and maturity aids learning. These were the assertions of Waldman and Avolio [35]; Sturman [36]; Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir and Kumar [37] and they also found a significant moderate positive relationship between age and achievement. Hence, gender does not determine attitude but the individual through growth, age and maturity could have a different point of view and attitude towards situations; examinations inclusive.

CONCLUSION

There is low level of emotional intelligence among University of Ilorin undergraduate students. Majority of the respondents have negative attitude towards examination. There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of Undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. There is a significant relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the emotional intelligence of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin. There is a significant relationship between gender and age as predisposing factors to the attitude of undergraduates at the University of Ilorin towards examination.

RECOMMENDATION

Students in general should be made to cultivate the habit of developing high emotional intelligence as it would help them to develop effective leadership skills such as improved communication among peers and other people, less school and workplace conflict, better problem solving skills and increased likelihood of promotions to greater heights.

Students should develop a positive attitude toward education, learning and examination. This is because for an individual to be promoted, he/she needs to be assessed on what was taught. Therefore, when students become more focused on their studies, treasure and value education, they would know the reason why they are in school and would thus not cut-corners to pass examinations. Examinations would thus be seen as a test to assess an individual's mastery of the concept taught.

The four essential competencies of emotional intelligence: self-awareness; self-management; social

awareness and relationship management should be developed by every student who is positively conscious of developing his/her emotional intelligence. The self-awareness and self-management focuses on how an individual could relate positively with the self; while the social awareness and relationship management focuses on how to relate with other people.

As age has been found to be a significant factor in learning, there is the need for curriculum developers, teachers and lecturers to take the age of the learners into account when developing curriculum (i.e. age based curriculum) and designing instructions for the benefit of the students.

The study investigated relationship between emotional intelligence and attitude towards examination of undergraduates at University of Ilorin. The study was limited to a representative sample of four hundred (400) University of Ilorin undergraduates using purposive and stratified sampling techniques. The study was also limited to moderating variables of gender and age. The analysis of data was limited in its execution to the use of percentages, means and standard deviations for demographic data of respondents; while Multiple Regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation which are robust statistical tools, were used for the research hypotheses.

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