

Emotional Intelligence and Career Maturity of Senior Secondary School Students in Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the predictive influence of emotional intelligence on career maturity of senior secondary school students in Abuja, Nigeria. The design used for this study was descriptive research of survey type. The population comprised all secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 816 students from 12 public and 12 private secondary schools. Thirty four students were drawn from each of the selected secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Two adopted instruments: Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), and Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by one expert in counselling psychology and another one in tests and measurement. The internal reliability coefficient stood at 0.87 for EIS and CMI in the current study. Data collected were analysed using mean scores and simple regression. One research question was raised and one hypothesis guided the study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted career maturity ($f = 12.59, p < 0.05$). Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that, teachers, parents, school administrators and school counsellors should keep on working hard to enhance and maintain emotional intelligence of students and effectively guide them towards appropriate career decision-making.

Keywords: Emotional, intelligence, career, maturity, secondary, school, students

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage of life full of crises and challenges. During this period, adolescents take some decisions that could affect their personal, educational and professional development. It is very important for them to take right career decisions. However, inability of any adolescent to take right career decisions may affect him/her after graduating from secondary schools or throughout his life time. Adolescence stage is a maturational stage which inturn corresponds to the period of

secondary education and it is precisely at this stage that students engage in academic and career decision-making which have important repercussions for their future.

Many factors such as peer, socio-economic status, parents, gender, family obligations and career opportunities influence career decision making of adolescents (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; Ghuangpeng, 2011). Busacca and Taber (2002) advanced career maturity as a prerequisite for making wiser and realistic occupational choices. The implication is that the more mature an individual is, the more he or she would be able to select an occupation that is not only realistic but incorporates his or her self-concept. Ezeani (2013) conducted a review on career choice among primary and secondary school students on basic issues that influence career choice and identified knowledge of the job, self-knowledge, parental and group constraints and parental financial status as factors influencing career choice pattern of students.

Despite the fact that career maturity is very important and crucial to wise career decision making as advanced by Busacca and Taber (2002), it is worrisome to note that many researchers have reported low career maturity among secondary school students in Nigeria (Oyebade, 2003; Salami, 2008; Adegoroye, Batunde, Ibimiluyi & Ajagbe, 2011; Iboro & Oladipo, 2014; Babatunde, 2017). The purpose of the present study was to investigate the extent to which emotional intelligence influenced career maturity of secondary school students and make appropriate recommendations.

Coetzee and Roythorne-Jacobs (2007) and Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) described career maturity as a person's ability to make career decisions that reflect decisiveness, self-reliance and independence. Career maturity is the ability to take age appropriate career decisions. It is broadly defined as the individual's readiness or ability to make informed age-appropriate career decisions and manage his or her career developmental tasks (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). The developmental nature of the construct means that individual's career maturity is relative to his or her coping in relation to his or her peers. Career maturity has also been defined as a constellation of physical, psychological and social characteristics (Super, 1990). It is the individual's readiness to cope with the developmental tasks with which he or she is confronted because of his or her biological and social developments and societal expectations of people who have reached that stage of development. Individual's career maturity depends on his or her ability to cope with the demands of the environment at any given life stage and the readiness he or she has to cope with these demands.

Career maturity has its origins in Super's developmental theory of career behaviour (Dhillon & Kaur, 2005) and assumes a great importance in the life course of adolescents. Crites (1978) has also stressed the importance of career maturity in the life course of an individual. In his argument, a career immature individual cannot make

an optional career decision. Crites (1978) and Super (1957) emphasized that a career mature individual would normally exhibit certain characteristics which include, ability to gather information about self and obtain necessary competences that would allow him or her make informed decision about a career.

Researchers have examined factors influencing career maturity of secondary school students. Factors such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, academic achievement, occupational information, self-appraisal, commitment etc have been identified as influencing career maturity of secondary school students (Buys, 2014; Wout & Dyk, 2016). A careful look at the available literature revealed that very little has been done to examine the relationship that exists between emotional intelligence and career maturity among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. This is one of the major gaps to be filled by the present study.

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to understand his or her own and others' emotions and feelings, to use this knowledge in decision making process and actions. Emotional intelligence also refers to regulation of emotions and the promotion of better emotions and thought of individuals (Mayer & Salovey 1997). There are two theories or models of emotional intelligence, the mixed model of emotional intelligence and the ability model of emotional intelligence.

The mixed model of emotional intelligence was introduced by Goleman (1998). The emotional intelligence model introduced by Goleman (1998) focuses on Emotional Intelligence as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive managerial performance, measured by multi-rater assessment (Bradberry & Greaves, 2005). Goleman's model outlines four main Emotional Intelligence construct (Goleman, 1998)

1. Self-awareness: The ability to read one's emotions and recognise their impact while using these feelings to guide decision
2. Self-Management: Involves controlling one's emotions and pulses and adapting to changing circumstances.
3. Social Awareness: The ability to sense, understand and react to other's emotions while comprehending social networks.
4. Relationship Management: The ability to inspire, influence and develop others while managing conflict.

The ability based model views emotions as useful sources of information that help one to make sense of and navigate the environment (Salovey & Grewal, 2005). The model proposed that individuals vary in their ability to process information of an emotional nature and in their ability to relate emotional process to a wider cognition. This ability

is seen to manifest itself in certain adaptive behaviours. This model proposes that Emotional Intelligence includes four types of abilities (Salovey & Grewal, 2005):

1. **Perceiving Emotions:** The ability to detect and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices and cultural artefacts – including the ability to identify one’s own emotions. Perceiving emotions represents a basic aspect of emotional intelligence, as it makes all other processing of emotional information possible.
2. **Using Emotions:** The ability to harness emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving. The emotionally intelligent person can capitalise fully upon his or her changing moods in order to best fit the task at hand.
3. **Understanding emotions:** The ability to comprehend emotional language and to appreciate complicated relationship among emotions. Ability to be sensitive to slight variations between emotions and the ability to recognize and describe how emotions evolve over time.
4. **Managing emotions:** The ability to regulate emotions in ourselves and in others. The emotionally intelligent person can harness emotions, even negative ones and manage them to achieve intended goals.

Studies of emotional intelligence have shown its relevance to many aspects of life and the role it plays in the interactions and adjustments in daily lives. Akomolafe and Adebayo (2012) used descriptive design of survey type to assess emotional intelligence among secondary school students in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. The results revealed that emotional intelligence was low among the majority of the participants. Salami (2010) examined the relationship of emotional intelligence with career maturity and the moderating role of gender in the relationship. Results indicated that emotional intelligence and gender predicted career maturity and gender moderated the relationship between emotional intelligence and career development. Jadab, Pranab and Soni (2015) investigated the emotional maturity of secondary school students in Lakhimpur and Sonitpur districts of Assam. The finding of the study indicated that there was no significant difference in various areas of emotional maturity of government and private school students; no significant difference was found in the emotional maturity level of boys and girls school students; and there was no significant difference in the emotional maturity level of rural and urban secondary school students of both districts of Assam.

Ayogu (2015) carried out a study on emotional intelligence and its implication for career development in selected Federal Universities in South East, Nigeria. The findings revealed that leadership, negotiation and decision making were significant areas that required emotional intelligence in the management of selected Federal Universities in South East, Nigeria. The study concluded that emotional intelligence had tremendous implication on career development of staff.

It has been proved that individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence experience more career success, build stronger personal relationships, are more effective and enjoy better health than those with low levels of emotional intelligence (Rahayu, 2004). According to Hay (1999), people who are emotionally intelligent are more successful in their career than their counterparts that are low on emotional intelligence because they are able to recognize and use their own and others' emotional state to regulate behaviour and deal with the environment. People are typically advised not to be influenced by personal emotions when making important decisions. However, emotions are integral part of cognitive systems involved in decisions (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003). In fact, Emmerling and Cherniss (2003) considered career choice as the culmination of a series of decisions, not as a single decision made at one point. During the process of career decision-making, a number of aspects may be affected by emotions, such as the number of career options under consideration, tolerance for risky career decision, the amount and type of self-exploration that individuals engage in during the choice process and the way in which the information is related to the career choice being processed. Hence, the main purpose of the present study was to find the predictive influence of emotional intelligence on career maturity of secondary school students.

Research Question

To achieve the aforementioned objective of the study, one research question was raised:

- 1) What is the emotional intelligence level of secondary school students in Abuja Metropolis?

Hypothesis

One hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

Ho1: There is no significant predictive influence of emotional intelligence on career maturity of secondary school students.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design of survey type. This design enabled the researchers to collect data from the sample for the purpose of analysis, interpretation, and generalisation. The target population comprised students in public and private secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in the study. The study was situated in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja which has six (6) Local Government Areas. Stratified random sampling technique was employed in choosing two (2) public and two (2) private secondary schools for the study from each of the six Local Government Areas. Therefore, twelve (12) public and twelve (12) private secondary schools were

randomly selected for the study. The respondents comprised 816 Senior Secondary School students [Male = 458 (55.6%); Female = 362 (44.4%)] randomly sampled from 24 secondary schools. Thirty four (34) students per school were randomly chosen from Senior Secondary School III (SSSIII) only. The mean age of the sample was 17 years (SD = 0.94).

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Law, Wong and Song (2004) and Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) developed by Crites and Savickas (1995) were used for the collection of data from the respondents. Emotional Intelligence Scale was used to measure the emotional intelligence levels of the respondents. It is a popular self-report measure of emotional intelligence. It is a 16 item scale with 4 sections viz.: SEA (self-emotional appraisal, 4 items), OEA (other emotional appraisal, 4 items), UOE (use of emotions, 4 items), and ROE (regulation of emotion, 4 items). The scale adopted a 5-point scale ranging from "1=strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree" for this study. The Cronbach's alpha of the 4 subscales ranged from 0.83 to 0.90. The validity of the scale has been reported by Law, Wong and Song (2004). The internal reliability coefficient for Law, Wong and Long Emotional Intelligence Scale was 0.87 in the current study. Scores below 40 on the emotional intelligence scale was considered as low.

Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) scale was used to measure the attitudes and competency that are important in making decision about one's career. The scale was developed by Crites and Savickas (1995). It is a 4 point likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale has 50 items. The scale assesses attitudes and feelings about future career choice. The instrument also utilized a four-point Likert rating scale classified as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The internal reliability coefficient for Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) was 0.87 in the current study.

The researchers were assisted by two trained research assistants who helped in the administration of questionnaires in the sampled schools while completed copies of the questionnaires were collected from the respondents on the same day. Administration of the instruments took twelve (12) working days. This method ensured 100% rate of return of the questionnaires. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple regression analysis to determine the strength of relationship between independent and dependent variables. The result was held significant at 0.05 level, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

Presentation of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the emotional intelligence level of Secondary School Students?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics showing the Emotional Intelligence of Secondary School Students

Type of School	N	\bar{x}	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Public School	408	52.2672	9.14151	.39664
Private School	408	52.7843	8.01182	.45257
Total	816	52.5257	8.59387	.30085

From the Table 1, students from public secondary school had almost the same level of emotional intelligence ($\bar{x} = 52.27$; $SD = 9.14$) with students from private secondary schools ($\bar{x} = 52.78$; $SD = 8.59$). In addition, Secondary School Students in FCT Abuja had high level of emotional intelligence ($\bar{x} = 52.52$; $SD = 8.59$).

Ho1: There is no significant predictive influence of emotional intelligence on career maturity of secondary school students.

Data were analyzed using simple regression

Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis on Career Maturity Data

R= 0.394; R^2 (Adjusted) = 0.153
 Standard error of the estimate = 10.414

Analysis of Variance					
Source of variation	Df	Sum of squares	Mean square	F-ratio	P
Regression	1	1589.47	1589.47	12.59	< 0.05
Residual	814	102756.586	126.237		
Total	815	104346.058			

From Table 2, the result of the analysis yielded a coefficient of simple regression (R) of 39% and adjusted regression square (R^2) of 0.153. This revealed that emotional intelligence predicted about 15.3% of the variation in their career maturity while 84.7% was due to other factors not considered in this study. In determining the level of significance between the criterion measure and predictor variables, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used and the f-calculated value was 12.59. This is significant

at 0.05 level ($F_{(1, 814)} = 12.59$; $p < .05$). The implication of the findings is that emotional intelligence significantly predicted secondary school students' career maturity.

Discussion of findings

The finding of this study revealed that public and private secondary school students in Abuja metropolis are emotionally intelligent. This outcome disagreed with the findings of Akomolafe and Adebayo, (2012). They found that emotional intelligence was low among the majority of Secondary School Students in Ibadan Metropolis. The contrast between the findings of this study and that of Akomolafe and Adebayo (2012) could be due to the sample size used. Akomolafe and Adebayo (2012) used three hundred and ninety three (393) students, the present study used eight hundred and sixteen Secondary School Students.

In this study, career maturity of the students was found to be significantly predicted by the emotional intelligence. The result showed that greater emotional intelligence was associated with increased career maturity. This finding was consistent with existing literature which had suggested that high career maturity would be related to greater ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotions, understand and regulate emotions (Emmerling & Cherniss, 2003; Salami, 2010; Jadap, Pranab & Soni, 2013; Ayogu, 2015). The possible reasons for the outcome of this study is that emotionally intelligent individual would possess some characteristics capable of enhancing his or her career maturity. These characteristics include emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, self-confidence, self-control, innovation and adaptability, achievement drive, commitment and innovation.

Conclusion and recommendations

The outcome of this study clearly revealed that emotional intelligence was a significant variable predicting career maturity of secondary school students. Based on the findings of this study, counselling and educational psychologists, teachers and principals should collectively focus on helping all secondary school students to develop and maintain high level of emotional intelligence. Educators should aid the development of emotional skills of secondary school students, no matter the age. Another implication of the findings from this study is that counselling psychologists should regularly assess emotional intelligence of students when assisting those having career decision-making problems and those who are not mature career wise.

The Federal Government of Nigeria should also step up efforts towards training and posting Guidance Counsellors to all secondary schools to provide career counselling to the students on career maturity. Schools should promote good environments that not only focus on the academic curriculum but also aim at overall development of students

by encouraging them to participate in numerous activities which would in turn help them to improve their career maturity.

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