

Imperatives of Emotional Intelligence On Psychological Wellbeing among Adolescents

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Received August 14, 2013; Revised September 09, 2013; Accepted September 27, 2013

Abstract Psychological wellbeing is a stochastic phenomenon that can be meaningfully pursued through nondestructive behaviors epitomized by emotional intelligence (EI). Abnormal and normal behaviours mark the two ends of a continuum, and a person who is unable to function effectively in day-to-day life may be regarded as psychologically abnormal and far from a state of psychological wellbeing. Recent research has shown that children are growing lonely and depressed, more angry and unruly, more nervous and prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive. And also that decline in EI among adolescents manifests in problems such as despair, alienation, drug abuse, crime and violence, bullying and dropping out of school. The survey research design was used for the study and it was found through statistical analyses that emotional intelligence influences psychological wellbeing among adolescents. Five recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: *stochastic phenomenon, continuum, abnormal and normal behaviours, emotional intelligence, psychological wellbeing, alexithymia, adolescents*

Cite This Article: John N. N. Ugoani, and Meg. A. Ewuzie, "Imperatives of Emotional Intelligence On Psychological Wellbeing among Adolescents." *American Journal of Applied Psychology* 1, no. 3 (2013): 44-48. doi: 10.12691/ajap-1-3-3.

1. Background

Emotional Intelligence in its broadest sense is an index of independent but conceptually related factors that when understood and effectively applied results to personal bliss. The basic idea is that emotional intelligence skills involve emotional processing and are necessary for a minimum level of competence and adequate intelligent functioning. Evidence as in [1] states that to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing, psychiatrists began research in the area of alexithymia in the early 1950s and started reporting certain distinct characteristics in their patients. The term alexithymia from the Greek meaning no words or feeling was used to refer to psychiatric patients who are unable to appraise and then verbally express their emotions. Since then certain physiological explanations for alexithymia have been proposed, among them that it may be due to blocking of impulses from the right to the left hemisphere at the corpus callosum or to a disconnection between limbic systems and higher cortical activities. Although such theorizing has been interesting, associated operationalization does not yet bear on such physiological theories.

Operationalizations have, however, been provided for emotional expression. Accordingly, the psychiatrists were finding treatment of these patients difficult due to lack of emotional awareness and externalized style of living in

which behavior was guided by rules and regulations rather than feelings. Research as in [2] found that alexithymia has also been associated with substance abuse, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, and psychosomatic disorders. According to them, alexithymia has been associated with a number of health problems including inflammatory bowel disease, hypertension and gastrointestinal disorders. On account of this, an inverse association should exist between the constructs of alexithymia and emotional intelligence. Certainly, one would hypothesize that those individuals who suffer from alexithymia likewise should also have very low emotional intelligence as well as psychological wellbeing. Previous work like [4] posits that the person with emotional intelligence can be thought of as having attained at least a limited form of positive mental health and wellbeing. These individuals are aware of their own feelings and those of others. They are open to positive and negative aspects of internal experience, are able to recognize them, and when appropriate, communicate them. Such awareness will often lead to the effective regulation of affect within themselves and others, and so contribute to health and psychological wellbeing. Consequently the emotionally intelligent individual is often a pleasure to be around and also leaves others and groups feeling better. Emotional intelligence is appreciative of the fact that temporarily hurt feelings or emotional restraint is often important in the service of a greater objective [5-13].

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Many problems in adjustment may arise from deficit in emotional intelligence. Managing emotions like anger, anxiety and even happiness is critical to psychological wellbeing. People who do not have the capacity to regulate their own emotions may become slaves to them. Also individuals who make others feel unhappy or badly in certain situations may be perceived as cloddish or oafish and ultimately be hated. A more common problem involves people who cannot recognize emotions in themselves and are therefore unable to plan lives that fulfill them emotionally.

1.2. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.01 level of significance.

H₀: EI has no significant effect on psychological wellbeing.

H_i: EI has significant effect on psychological wellbeing.

1.3. Delineation of Study

The study was delimited to Aba, Owerri and Umuahia, South East Nigeria.

1.4. Literature Review

Literature in [14] opines that the importance of emotional expression for survival and second adaptation influenced the development of an EI model, which also stresses the importance of emotional expression and views the outcome of emotionally and socially intelligent behavior in terms of effective and successful adaptation. He hypothesized that effective emotional and social functioning should eventually lead to an overall sense of psychological wellbeing. To enjoy a reasonable level of psychological wellbeing an individual needs to be emotionally and socially intelligent and therefore be able to effectively understand and express himself or herself, relate well with and understand others and to successfully cope with daily demands, challenges and pressures and also express feelings and thoughts nondestructively. Several studies have found that emotional intelligence can have significant influence on various elements of living. For example, further study as in [16] reports that higher emotional intelligence was a predictor of life satisfaction. Additionally, work as in [17] found that people higher in emotional intelligence were also more likely to use an adoptive defense style and thus exhibit healthier psychological adaptation. Results as in [18] opine that higher emotional intelligence correlated significantly with higher parental warmth and attachment style, while others like in [2] found that those scoring high in EI show increased positive interpersonal relationships among children, adolescents, and adults [10,19] likewise negative relationships have been identified between emotional intelligence and problem behaviour. Experiment in [22] found that lower emotional intelligence was associated with violent and trouble-prone behavior among college students. They report that use of illegal drugs and alcohol, as well as increased participation in deviant behaviours (i.e involvement in physical fights and vandalism) are correlated to low emotional intelligence. In a study of 15 male adolescents sex offenders (15-17 years old) it was found that sex offenders have difficulty in identifying their

own and others feelings, two important elements of emotional intelligence. Empirical study as in [20] found that the average intelligence quotient (IQ) for children are on the increase around the world. The reasons include better nutrition, good educational facilities, computer literacy and smaller family size. But there is a dangerous paradox, however as children grow ever smarter in intelligence quotient, their emotional intelligence is on the decline. He reported that on average, children are growing more lonely and depressed, more angry and unruly, more nervous and prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive. He also suggests that decline in EI among adolescents manifests in problems such as despair, alienation, drug abuse, crime and violence, bullying and dropping out of school. What this portends for the workforce of tomorrow is quite troubling. Psychological wellbeing depends on normal behaviors against abnormal behaviours. Therefore, to attain a reasonable level of psychological wellbeing the individual should have overcome the problems of abnormal behaviours. Because of the difficulty in distinguishing normal from abnormal behaviours psychologists have struggled to devise a precise definition of abnormal behavior to involve a sense of personal discomfort. This definition concentrates on the psychological consequences of the behaviours for the individual. In this approach behavior is considered abnormal if it produces a sense of personal distress, anxiety, or guilt in an individual – or if it is harmful to others in some way. In general, a person who is unable to function effectively in day-to-day life may be regarded as psychologically abnormal and far from a state of psychological wellbeing. To a great extent, psychological wellbeing is a stochastic phenomenon that can be pursued through the application of emotional intelligence [14,15,18,21,23-33].

Psychological wellbeing is also determined by the complex interactions between individual characteristics, social and economic factors and the physical environment. For example, social status affects psychological wellbeing by determining the degree of control people have over life circumstances such as their capacity to act and make choices for themselves. Higher social positions and income somehow act as a shield against anxiety disorders. Support from families, friends and community is associated with better psychological/emotional health and anxiety. The importance of effective responses to stress and having the support of family and friends provides a caring and supportive relationship that seems to act as a buffer to psychological wellbeing. The community is a social influence that affects the health as well as psychological and emotional wellbeing of individuals. Again the effect of parental care and early childhood experiences on subsequent coping skills, competence on future psychological wellbeing cannot be over emphasized. Children born in low income families are more likely to have low birth weight, to eat less nutritious food and to have difficulties with psychological and social problems throughout their lives. For example, mothers at each level up the income scale are likely to have babies with higher birth weight on average than those on the level below. This presupposes that the basic biology and organic makeup of the human body are a fundamental determinants of psychological wellbeing. Genetic endowment provides an inherited predisposition to a wide

range of individual responses that affects psychological wellbeing. Although socio-economic and environmental factors are important determinants of overall psychological wellbeing, in some instances genetic endowment appears to predispose certain individuals to particular diseases or emotional problems like anxiety disorders [34,35,36,37]. Anxiety can be described as a “feeling of nervousness or worry” when anxiety becomes chronic, when it continues even when there is no need to feel anxious, anxiety can become a disorder that negatively affects psychological wellbeing [38].

The U. S. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reports that anxiety disorders affect about 40 million American adults aged 18 years and older in a given year with negative consequences for individuals and their respective families. Moving towards a state of optimal psychological wellbeing can be achieved by making positive changes in lifestyle. It is not a static process but one in which the individual makes conscious, informed choices, takes action, moves and grows- an approach which returns the concept of psychological or emotional health to its root meaning that of wholeness and balance and put the power and responsibility in the hands of the individual and not others. An individual can improve his/her state of psychological wellbeing by becoming self-aware, and knowledgeable, developing positive lifestyle patterns, which include being actively involved in and committed to his/her own physical, intellectual, emotional, social, occupational and spiritual growth and development. An emotional dimension emphasizes awareness and acceptance of one’s feelings. Anger and depression are real feelings that must be overcome to return to a desired state of psychological wellbeing [39,40].

2. Methodology

The survey research design was used and the questionnaire and personal interview methods were used to gather data, through 385 respondents used for the study. The samples size was based on the study population and derived through Yamane’s popular formula. The two methods of data collection were used so as to validate data through each other. Data collected were filtered organized and coded before they were classified. ANOVA statistical method was used for data analysis based upon which opinions, recommendations and conclusions were made.

3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Population distribution of the study

Areas of study	Self employed	Government employed	Others	Total
Aba	105	50	63	218
Owerri	120	110	31	261
Umuahia	142	115	14	271
Total	367	275	108	750

Source: Field work: 2013

Table 2. Profile of Respondents

Variables	Measuring group	Frequency	Percentages
Sex	Female	198	51.43
	Male	187	48.57
	Total	385	100
Education	None	49	12.73
	Up to FSLC	98	25.45
	Up to WASC	137	35.58
	Up to tertiary	101	26.24
	Total	385	100
Age	18 – 25	108	28.01
	26 – 45	163	42.38
	46 – above	114	29.61
	Total	385	100
Dependents	None	17	4.42
	1 – 3	78	20.26
	1 – 10	140	36.36
	Others	150	38.96
	Total	385	100
Occupation	Self employed	87	22.60
	Govt. employed	109	28.31
	Others	189	49.09
	Total	385	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Table 3. Anova

<p><i>Total Sum of Square (TSS)</i></p> $= 632^2 + 463^2 + 351^2 + 596^2 + 444^2 + 337^2 + 443^2 + 278^2$ $+ 152^2 + 95^2 + 72^2 + 104^2 + 83^2 + 61^2 - \frac{4432}{15}$ $= 1838228 - 1309508.267$ $= 528719.73333$
<p><i>Sum of Square (SS)</i></p> $= \frac{1446^2 + 1377^2 + 1042^2 + 319^2 + 248^2}{3} - \frac{443^2}{15}$ $= 1745358 - 1309508.267$ $= 435849.733$
<p><i>Sum of Square of Error (SSE)</i></p> $= 632^2 + 463^2 + 351^2 + 596^2 + 444^2 + 337^2 + 443^2$ $+ 278^2 + 152^2 + 95^2 + 72^2 + 104^2 + 83^2$ $+ 61^2 - \frac{1446^2 + 1377^2 + 1042^2 + 319^2 + 248^2}{3}$ $= 1838228 - 1745358$ $= 92870$

Table 4. Result of Anova

Source of Variation	SS	Degree of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-ratio = MS/DF
Emotional Intelligence	435849.733	4	108962.4333	11.73
Error	92870	10	9287	
Total	528719.733	14		

From the ANOVA Table 4, $F(4) (10) (95\%) = 3.48$. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis since F-ratio is significantly greater than F-table of 11.74 and conclude that EI has significant influence on psychological wellbeing. This empirical study supports the view in [26] that individuals who have attained psychological wellbeing are optimistic. Their optimism permits them to persevere at tasks and ultimately achieve more. Their health is a lot better. They tend to have a supportive network of close relationships. Optimism, collaboration, happiness, love, among other factors associated with psychological wellbeing are all variables of emotional intelligence.

3.1. Discussions

Several studies have found that emotional intelligence can have a significant impact on various elements of everyday living. For example, performance measures of emotional intelligence have illustrated that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with an increased likelihood of attending to health and appearance, positive interactions with families and friends. This result supports the findings of researchers in the area of affective neuroscience that endorse the existence of a set of emotional abilities that comprise a form of intelligence which is distinct and different from standard intelligence or intelligence quotient. While intellectual; abilities such as verbal fluency, spatial logic, and abstract reasoning are based primarily in the neocortex, the components that constitute emotional intelligence have been found to exist as more of a neurological circuitry that links the limbic areas for emotion to the prefrontal cortex. A part of limbic system called *amygdala* is as in [17], "the seat of all passions," that facilitates the relationship and interaction of the emotional and thinking brains [41,42,43].

4. Recommendations

Parents should closely monitor the behaviours of their children from the early stages. This will help in ensuring that they cultivate the habit of nondestructive behaviors that will ensure their psychological wellbeing.

While at home parents should avoid exposing adolescents to violent images or films, to avoid giving them the wrong signal that may lead to destructive behaviours.

Institutions of higher learning should take the issue of students counseling more seriously. The rate of violent in high institutions is on the high side. It is expected that proper counseling will help in reducing the tide with a view to producing well balanced future leaders.

Older people should try to be accessible to adolescents. This will reduce creating fears in them and eventually minimizing the occurrence of abnormal behaviors that challenge psychological wellbeing.

Empathy and not condemnation is critical in creating a sense of wellbeing in adolescents. Seeing things from others perspectives leads to acceptance and a sense of belonging needed to produce quality individuals.

Scope of Further Research

Further research should examine the relationship between EI and anxiety to see if it will reduce the rate at which executives develop high heart rate nowadays.

Statement of competing interests

The authors have no competing interest

Limitation of the Study

The study was limited by poor road network and lack of research grant.

5. Conclusions

Emotional reactions like love, happiness, tenderness, zest, joy, elation, pleasure, fear, anxiety among others that lead to psychological wellbeing or otherwise reside for a long time among adolescents and influence their disposition. Therefore, emotional intelligence in daily living is critical in bringing about mental health and psychological wellbeing in individuals throughout life. Happy and emotionally intelligent people have high sense of self-esteem, which emphasizes the importance of individuality. They see themselves as more intelligent and better able to get along well with others than the average person. These people avoid all forms of destructive behaviours that challenge individual psychological wellbeing. This study found that EI is significantly correlated with psychological wellbeing.

Acknowledgement

No research grant was received from any source. This work is the intellectual property of the authors.

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