

## The Role of Psychological Wellbeing and Emotional Intelligence in Maintaining Healthy Interpersonal Relationship

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### Abstract

*A form of intelligence that involves 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 is necessary especially among University students. The present study investigated the relationship between psychological wellbeing and emotional intelligence among undergraduates. A total of 241 participants comprising 120 male and 121 female undergraduate students, between the ages of 20 – 30 years, with a mean age of 24.20 and a standard deviation of 2.71 were selected. They were selected making use of simple random sampling technique from population of Faculty of the Social Science, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Environmental Science, Agbani Campus, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu State. Psychological WellBeing Scale (Ryff, 1989) with internal consistency reliability coefficients that ranges from .86 to .93 for the six sub-scales and Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2002) with a Cronbach Alpha of .77 as reported by Chinaweze (2014) were used in the study. Correlation design was adopted while Pearson product moment correlation statistics result showed that Psychological well being (Autonomy  $r = .41, P < .01, r^2 = .17$ ; Environmental Mastery  $r = .54, P < .01, r^2 = .34$ ; Personal Growth  $r = .56, P < .01, r^2 = .31$ ; Positive Relation  $r = .59, P < .01, r^2 = .335$ ; Purpose in Life  $r = .40, P < .01, r^2 = .16$ ; and Self Acceptance  $r = .28, P < .01, r^2 = .08$ ) correlated significantly with emotional intelligence. The findings were discussed in view of literature reviewed and recommendations were made.*

*Keywords: adolescents, emotional intelligence, intimacy, interpersonal relationship, psychological health.*

### Introduction

The psychological health and well-being of University students is of prime importance in comprehending and assessing student's academic goals, achievement and success. This is because psychological well-being is an indispensable factor that aids an individual to develop and maximize his or her enormous potentials. It is of interest to note that, University students represent the future of their families, communities, and countries but also face upscale

challenges and stress in the direction of success attainment in their academic and routine endeavours despite the financial constraint and difficulties witnessed by many students (El Ansari, & Stock, 2010). University is a period of increased responsibility for choices and healthy practices (Colic, Satalic, & Lukesic, 2003). The undue tight schedule of periodic curricular activities like daily lectures, practical classes, examinations as well as extra-curricular events can be so stress packed for students to induce some negative and unhealthy experiences. This in turn can provoke some level of physical or physiological responses within an individual. Walid et al (2013) in their study discovered that the level of health complaints and psychological problems/burdens is relatively high among university students.

It is therefore imperative to look into the issue concerning the psychological well-being of university undergraduate, and to ascertain those factors that can either improve or hinder its development. Other studies have shown that “university students reported more health complaints than their working peers (Stewart-Brown, Evans, Patterson, Petersen, Doll, Balding, & Regis, 2000; Vaez, Kristenson, & Laflamme, 2004) but did not appear to seek help for these problems” (Boot, Donders, Vonk, & Meijman, 2009).

Emotional intelligence refers to a social intelligence that enables an individual to recognize his or her own, and other peoples' emotions. It also enables people to differentiate those emotions, and to make appropriate choices for thinking and action (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; Mayer & Salovey, 1993). Emotional intelligence, as a concept was primarily developed by Mayer & Salovey (1990), but it gained popularity by the studies of Goleman (1998, 1995). According to Mayer & Salovey (1990), emotional intelligence includes an "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. Emotional intelligence represent an intelligence that may be learned, developed and improved (Perkins, 1994; Sternberg, 1996). Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, (1998) defined it as the "ability to adapt to and recognize emotion, express emotion, regulate emotion and harness emotions." It is an array of personal, emotional and social competencies and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands (Baron, 1997). Goleman's (1995) model of emotional intelligence includes ‘several broad areas such as knowing one's own emotions, delaying gratification, and the ability to enter flow states’. Goleman (1995) submits that persons who possess emotional intelligence are emotionally stable and psychologically healthy. He distinguished gender differences in emotional intelligence thus: men with high emotional intelligence are described as poised, outgoing and cheerful, free of anxiety, committed to people or causes, ethical, and sympathetic and caring on the one hand. On the other hand, women who are emotionally intelligent are described as assertive and expressive, extraverted, positive and well-adapted to stress.

The basic components of Emotional Intelligence (EI) as identified by some researchers include: self-awareness (understanding their moods emotions and drives), self-regulation, (regulate one's emotions and behaviour) interpersonal skills (empathetic and constructive, cooperative), adaptability (capacity to cope with the environment), Mood and

motivation. Emotional intelligence plays an essential role in how individual cope with stressful conditions.

In a study conducted in Kwara State, Nigeria, that assesses the contribution of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being to students' behaviours and attitudes. Using Two hundred and forty-two students from a college of education, in Kwara State, Nigeria, they found that emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, happiness and life satisfaction over and above depression predicted students' behaviours and attitudes. The aim of the study is to examine and identify the relationships that exist between coping, emotional intelligence, and psychological wellbeing among the undergraduate students. Moreover, the few empirical studies done were basically carried out among foreign participants. This work intends to break new grounds by carrying out this study among our undergraduate students population in Enugu, Enugu State.

Thus, the present study will examine relationship between emotional intelligent and psychological well-being among university students.

### **Statement of the problem**

Emotional intelligence and Psychological Well Being are two very interesting concepts. It has been noticed that many times those who experience a good Psychological well Being have a very strong control over their emotions (i.e. high emotional intelligence). 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 fulfil them emotionally.

It is obvious that without fuel, a car is motionless, so without self belief how can an individual be the driver to tertiary educational success? Emotional Intelligence is essential for any student, as they are the leaders in their own life and drive either their success or failure in life especially in obtaining a degree. As any student would know, the motivation to success has to lie within themselves as the demands and stress levels are all part of the pursuit of educational success. This is why the researchers felt the need to conduct this study especially if there is low emotional intelligence how would it affect person's psychological well being, if its high what would be his psychological well being, and if they are related or not. Accordingly, the study will answer this pertinent question if there be a relationship between psychological well being and emotional intelligent among undergraduate students?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study is to examine if psychological well being will relate to emotional intelligence. Specifically the study will examine if there will be a relationship between psychological well being and emotional intelligent among undergraduate students.

## **Hypothesis**

There will be a significant relationship between psychological well being and emotional intelligent among Undergraduate Students.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Statistics**

The design for the study is correlation design. This is because the primary objective of the study is to examine the relation between the study variables (Psychological Well Being and Emotional Intelligence). Therefore, the statistics for the study is Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), while  $r^2$  was also used as coefficient of determination.

### **Participants**

A total of 241 participants comprising 120 male and 121 female undergraduate students, between the ages of 20 – 30 years, with a mean age of 24.20 and a standard deviation of 2.71 were selected. They were selected making use of simple random sampling technique from population of Faculty of the social Science, Faculty of Law and Faculty of Environmental Science, Agbani Campus, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu State.

### **Instrument**

Two sets of Instrument were used in the study. They are Psychological Well Being Scale and Emotional Intelligence Scale.

### **Psychological Well Being Scale (Ryff, 1989)**

Psychological well-being scale is an eighteen (18) self-report scale designed to measure psychological well-being. (Ryff, 1989). The instrument consists of six sub-scales (with three items in each sub-scale): (a) Autonomy, (b) Environmental mastery, (c) Personal growth, (d) Positive relationships with others, (e) Purpose in life, and (f) Self-acceptance. “The autonomy dimension assesses self-determination, independence, and an internal locus of control. The environmental mastery dimension measures one’s ability to manipulate and control complex environments. The personal growth dimension measures one’s needs to actualize and realize one’s potentials. The positive relationships with other’s dimension assess the ability to love, trust, and establish deep relationships with others. The purpose in life dimension is to measure one’s sense of direction and goals. The self-acceptance dimension assesses positive attitudes held toward the self” (Akin, 2008). Participants were made to respond on a 6-point scale that ranges from “strongly agree” (1) to “strongly disagree” (6). The following items are reverse: 1,5,9,10,12,13,15,18. Higher scores indicate higher psychological well-being within the respective dimension. The internal consistency reliability coefficients as reported by Ryff (1989) ranges from .86 to .93 for the six sub-scales. A pilot study was conducted with 42

final year psychology students. The reliability coefficient was found to be .63 for the entire scale.

### **Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002)**

Emotional Intelligence Scale is a 16-item scale designed as a short measure of emotional intelligence for use in organizational research. It measures four dimensions (Self emotion appraisal, emotion appraisal of others, use of emotion and regulation of emotion). Wong & Law (2002) reported Cronbach Alpha of .93 as an index of the scale's internal coefficients. All the items related to emotional intelligence were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree). Chinaweze (2014), in a pilot study using 86 staff of the Nigeria Police Force, Oji River Area Command obtained Cronbach's Alpha of .77, and mean = 50.90, SD = 8.52, V = 72.53. In addition, the researchers obtained a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .80 in a pilot study using Undergraduate Students of University of Nigeria Enugu Campus.

### **Procedure**

A total of 260 copies of questionnaires on psychological well being scale and emotional intelligent scale were randomly distributed within a period of two week on the target population. The administration of the questionnaires took the form of group testing in their respective classroom. The researchers asked students found in their respective Faculties to pick from the basket full of even and odd numbers. All that picked the odd numbers participated in the study and were given questionnaires to fill. Thus, after administration, 255 copies of the questionnaire were collected and 241 copies that were correctly filled were scored and analyzed.

## **RESULTS**

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistic and Zero order correlation coefficient matrix showing relationship between Psychological Well Being and Emotional Intelligent among Undergraduate Students

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Age	24.20	2.71	1							
2 Autonomy	10.63	3.03		1						
3 Environmental Mastery	11.18	3.59		.78**	1					
4 Personal Growth	12.51	3.35		.86**	.69**	1				
5 Positive Relation	11.72	4.03		.68**	.91**	.66**	1			
6 Purpose in Life	13.09	3.55		.81**	.70**	.85**	.66**	1		
7 Self Acceptance	12.57	3.56		.68**	.61**	.70**	.52**	.70**	1	
8 Emotional Intelligent	44.88	12.28		<b>.41**</b>	<b>.54**</b>	<b>.56**</b>	<b>.59*</b>	<b>.40**</b>	<b>.28</b>	1
8 Coefficient of Determinant( $r^2$ )				<b>.17</b>	<b>.34</b>	<b>.31</b>	<b>.35</b>	.16	.08	

\*\*;  $P < .01$ , \*;  $P < .05$  *Bold are relevant coefficient for research hypothesis*



The result shows that Psychological Well Being (Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relation, and Purpose in Life, Self Acceptance) correlated significantly with Emotional Intelligent. The table shows that correlation coefficients were as follows; Autonomy and Emotional Intelligent  $r = .41$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .17$ ; Environmental Mastery and Emotional Intelligent  $r = .54$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .34$ ; Personal Growth and Emotional Intelligent  $r = .56$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .31$ ; Positive Relation and Emotional Intelligent  $r = .59$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .335$ ; Purpose in Life and Emotional Intelligent  $r = .40$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .16$ ; and Self Acceptance and Emotional Intelligent  $r = .28$ ,  $P < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .08$ . Based on the result above, the stated hypothesis which states that “Psychological Well Being will significantly correlate with emotional intelligent” was accepted.

## **Discussion**

The relationships that prevail between psychological well-being emotional intelligence among the undergraduate students yielded a number of findings. These finding indicated that psychological well being and emotional intelligent strongly and positively correlated. This indicates that students who have high emotional intelligence are more likely to be psychologically healthy than those with low emotional intelligence. This goes further to confirm the hypothesis, that psychological well being is a key correlate of emotional intelligent among undergraduate students.

This discovery is consistent with the previous findings reported in the literature that emotional intelligence significantly relates to psychological well-being (Extremera, Ruiz-Aranda, Pineda-Galán, & Salguero, 2011). Quite a number of empirical studies have supported the present findings that students with high emotional intelligent level, report fewer physical symptoms and suicidal tendencies; they have reduced social anxieties, hopelessness and depression. They have very good self-esteem, show greater empathy, satisfying interpersonal relationships and use active coping strategies in dealing with their psychological problems. (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2002). There is also evidence that a lack of emotional intelligent provokes or exacerbates the emergence of problems among students. These problems as was summarized by (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2004) include deficit in the levels of students’ welfare and psychological adjustment; decrease in the quantity and quality of interpersonal relationships; drop in academic performance; emergence of disruptive behaviour and substance abuse.

Given the component of psychological well being as Ryff (1987), it appears that people who possess autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation, purpose in life and self acceptance; tend to express high level of stability in relationship with others. This finding suggests that people who are emotionally intelligent may experience lower emotional distress when they face stressful situations (Gohm, Corser, & Dalsky, 2005), which could result to a reciprocal increase in positive effects.

In the same way, emotionally intelligent individuals may be more likely to use positive coping strategies such as expression of feelings and eliciting social support, instead of maladaptive strategies such as rumination or avoidance, and thereby reduce negative affect

and increase well-being (Matthews et al., 2006). “They present a higher quality and greater quantity of interpersonal networks and social support, are less likely to engage in disruptive, aggressive or violent behaviour; they can obtain higher scholastic achievement faced with stressful situations more easily, and consume a lesser quantity of addictive substances (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, etc.)” (Extremera & Fernández-Berrocal, 2004).

Emotional intelligent people are also noted as individuals who feel they have more control over their environment because they exercise control over their negative emotions, resulting in a better and more feeling of mastery of their life and greater psychological well-being. (Shulman & Hemenover, 2006).

### **Implications of the Finding**

The result of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between psychological well being and emotional intelligent among undergraduate students and it has some practical implications. The university administrators, leaders and policy makers are therefore called upon to mount structures or campaigns to foster the increase in awareness and measurement of emotional intelligence knowing its gainful effects on psychological well-being and total personal wellness of an average student. As students are future community and nation builders, utmost importance should be laid on the full realization and total development of their real potentials.

Some researchers contend that emotional intelligence stands for an intelligence that may be learned, developed and improved (Perkins, 1994; Sternberg, 1996). Studies have indicated that emotional intelligent is both teachable and easily learnt; a pointer to the fact that some emotional intelligent oriented programmes could be organized in schools to help students develop and imbibe this important concept, in order to develop good psychological health needed to handle the challenges of academic work. In the words of Bar-On, (1997) `ever since the mid 1960s, there has been growing numbers of children around the world who have been introduced to emotional intelligent.-enriching curricula such as those developed and promoted by Self-Science (Freedman, 2003; McCown, Jensen, & Freedman, 2007), the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Patrikakou, & Weissberg, 2007; Zins, Elias, & Greenberg, 2007) and the National School Climate Center (Cohen, & Sandy, 2007).

Some of these programmes have targeted both individual schools, cities (Hayes, 2007), entire school districts (Brackett, Alster, Wolfe, Katulak, & Fale, 2007), and even larger geographic areas (Maree, & Mokhuane, 2007). Such a programme can be adopted and introduced into Nigerian Education Curriculum for adequate development of emotional intelligence of the student. Emphatically, if we must build a complete human person for the future of the society, we must train the students in emotional and affective worlds. Emphasis should be laid not only on the learning and academic achievement but also on these two important psychological variables: emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing and in the long run total personal wellbeing. When students are emotionally stable and psychologically healthy, they stand a better chance of adjusting successfully to the demands

and challenges of academic activities. Psychological health and wellbeing is therefore the backbone of personal health and wellbeing.

### **Suggestions for further Study**

Parents should closely monitor the behaviours of their children from the early stages. This will help in ensuring that they cultivate the habit of non-destructive behaviours that will ensure their psychological wellbeing. Institutions of higher learning should take the issue of students counselling more seriously. The rate of violence in high institutions is on the high side. It is expected that proper counselling will help in reducing the tide with a view to producing well balanced future leaders. Older people should try to be accessible to young adults. This will reduce creating fears in them and eventually minimizing the occurrence of abnormal behaviours that challenge psychological wellbeing. Empathy and not condemnation is critical in creating a sense of wellbeing in young adults. Seeing things from others perspectives leads to acceptance and a sense of belonging needed to produce quality and healthy individuals.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

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 young adults 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 Emotional Intelligence is significantly correlated with psychological wellbeing.

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