Emotional intelligence, parental involvement and academic achievement
Majid Vahedi a*  Hossein Nikdel b *

Abstract

Academic achievement is undoubtedly a research after the heart of educational psychologists. In their attempt to investigate what determines academic outcomes of learners, they have come with more questions than answers. In recent time, prior literature has shown that learning outcomes (academic achievement and academic performance) have been determined by such variables as; family, school, society, and motivation factors (e.g.,Aremu & Sokan,2003) In the beginning, psychologists focused on cognitive constructs like memory and problem solving in their first attempt to write on intelligence. This did not last when researchers began to challenge this orientation and recognized that there are other non-cognitive aspects of intelligence. For instance, Robert Thorndike wrote about social intelligence in 1937. And as early as 1943, David Wechsler proposed that the non-intelligence abilities are essential for predicting ability to succeed in life. Imbroscion and Berlach (2003) have remarked that “success” may be viewed in three main domains. A good student is often referred to as being “intelligent”, or “well behaved”, or “academically successful”. On parental involvement and academic achievement, studies have shown to date that the two constructs seems to be positively related. Findings have demonstrated that parent’s involvement in the education of the children has been found to be of benefit to parents, children, and schools (Tella and Tella 2003; Campbell, 1995; Rich, 1987). Rasink and Fredrick’s (1988) concluded that parents play an invaluable role in laying the foundation for their children’s learning; Zang and Carrasquillo (1995) also similarly remarked that when children are surrounded by caring, capable parents and are able to enjoy nurturing and moderate competitive kinship, a foundation for literacy is built with no difficulty. Cotton and Wiklund (2005) ably capped it by asserting that the more intensively parents are involved in their children’s learning; the more beneficial are the achievement effects. Thus, it is believed that when parents monitor homework, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, are active in parents –teacher associations, and help children develop plans for their future; children are more likely to respond and do well in school.

Key words: Emotional intelligence, parental involvement and academic achievement

1. Introduction

Academic achievement is undoubtedly a research after the heart of educational psychologists. In their attempt to investigate what determines academic outcomes of learners, they have come with more questions than answers. In recent time, prior literature has shown that learning outcomes (academic achievement and academic performance) have been determined by such variables as; family, school, society, and motivation factors (e.g.,Aremu & Sokan,2003;Aremu and Oluwole,2001;Aremu,2000). In the same vein, Parker, Creque, Harris, Majeski, Wool, and Hogan (2003) noted that much of the previous studies have focused on the impact of demographic and socio-
psychological variables on academic achievement. More recently, another emerging dimension to the determinant of academic achievement is government factor (e.g., Aremu & Sokan, 2003; Aremu, 2004). In spite of the seeming exhaustiveness of literature on the determinants of academic achievement of learners, there seems to be more area of interest to be investigated. This becomes obvious in view of the continue interest of researchers and Educational psychologists; and the continued attention of government and policy makers and planners.

Academic performance (most especially of secondary school students) has been largely associated with many factors. Most students in secondary schools in Nigeria are daily confronted with challenges of coping with their academics under serious emotional strains occasioned by long walk to school, poor school environment, and been taught by unmotivated teachers. Couple with this, is an ‘uncooperative’-to –study attitude of parents who more often than toil to provide for the needs of the family. These would definitely not augur well for academic success. It is therefore, instructive in the present paper to study the relationship among emotional intelligence, parental involvement and academic achievement of student’s schools.

2. Emotional Intelligence: A Practical Definition

The publication of Daniel Goleman’s book on emotional intelligence (1995) has led to widespread use of EI in business, industry training, and education. Our definition and the positive assessment instruments we use to quantify emotional intelligence are based on extensive research and application studies ranging from 1977-2004 in Transformative Learning in Academic Excellence education. More than thirty-five completed doctoral studies provide support for the educational applications of emotional intelligence that we have suggested.

Emotionally intelligent behavior is wise behavior. To behave wisely requires the synergistic effect of the emotional mind with the cognitive mind. Thinking and feeling are not totally independent processes, and emotionally intelligent behavior requires a harmony of the two minds. The emotional mind makes many positive contributions to academic achievement, productivity, and mental/physical health. In the sections that follow, we briefly describe some important educational applications of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence, as measured by our assessment instruments, is a series of interrelated skills and competencies. In terms of construct validity, our instruments provide valid and reliable measurements of interpersonal skills (assertive communication), self-management skills (time management, goal achievement, commitment ethic, and personal responsibility), and the intrapersonal skills of self efficacy and stress management. The general factors assessed may be thought of as indicators of constructive thinking, goal achievement, and personal responsibility or effective self-management.

It is important to note that the EI skills as measured by the assessment instruments are general measures of effective cognitive functioning. Unlike traditional measures of intelligence (scholastic aptitude, achievement) and traditional measures of personality, the assessments provide information about how a student is actually applying cognitive behavioral skills in daily life. The measured EI skills are extremely important to academic achievement, retention or program completion, and effective interpersonal and Intrapersonal behaviors. Developing these skills will improve a student’s performance in school, work, and life.

3. Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance

In the beginning, psychologists focused on cognitive constructs like memory and problem solving in their first attempt to write on intelligence. This did not last when researchers begun to challenge this orientation and recognised that there are other non-cognitive aspects of intelligence. For instance, Robert Thorndike wrote about social intelligence in 1937. And as early as 1943, David Wechsler proposed that the non-intelligence abilities are essential for predicting ability to succeed in life. Imbosciano and Berlach (2003) have remarked that “success” may be viewed in three main domains. A good student is often referred to as being “intelligent”, or “well behaved”, or “academically successful”. Arising from this are the questions: Are there any connection between these domains? Is there a strong connection, between intelligence and academic achievement? Do students with high
intelligence behave better? These and many more questions underscore the important place intelligence has been found to play in academic success.

Goleman (1995) gave a short of answer when he asserted that success depends on several intelligences and on the control of emotion. Specifically, he stressed that intelligence (IQ) alone is no more the measure of success. According to him intelligent account for only 20% of the total success, and the rest goes for Emotional and Social intelligences. Abisamra (2000) then queried that if this is found to be so, why the teachers don’t begin to teach its components (i.e., emotional intelligence) to students at schools? He then concluded that if emotional intelligence affects student achievement, then it is imperative for schools to integrate it in their curricula and thereby raising the level of students’ success.

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), Emotional Intelligence is being able to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this to guide one’s thinking and actions. Again, Salovey and Mayer (1993) wrote that an emotionally intelligent person is skilled in four areas: identifying, using, understanding, and regulating emotions. Similarly, Goleman also stressed that emotional intelligence consists of five components: Knowing one’s emotions (self-awareness), managing them, motivating self, recognising emotions in others (empathy), and handling relationships.

In recent times therefore, social scientists and educational psychologists are beginning to uncover the relationship of emotional intelligence to other phenomenon. These are: leadership (Ashfort & Humphrey, 1995); group performance (Williams & Sternberg, 1988); academic achievement (Abisamra, 2000); and policing (Aremu, 2005). The foregoing attest to the significance of emotional intelligence to all constructs (school achievement inclusive). As a matter of fact, emotional intelligence (EI) has recently attracted a lot of interest in the academic literature.

Specifically, Finnegan (1998) argued that school should help students learn the abilities underlying the emotional intelligence. This he believes could lead to achievement from formal education years of the child. In a recent studies conducted by Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan and Majeski (2001, 2002) they discovered that various emotional and social competencies were strong predictors of academic success. Similarly, Parker, et al...(2003) found emotional intelligence to be significant predictors of academic success. In the same vein, Low and Nelson (2004) reported that emotional intelligence skills are key factors in the academic achievement and test performance of high school and college students respectively. Likewise, Abisamra (2000) reported that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. He therefore canvassed for inclusion of emotional intelligence in the schools ‘curricula. Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham in Cotton and Wikelund (2005) argued that any investigation of the potential effects of emotional intelligence on academic performance must be pursued in a specific context. In essence, the importance of emotional intelligence on academic achievement has been found to be very significant. Nevertheless, and in spite of the studies reviewed, there is still a need to further investigate the relationship of emotional intelligence to academic achievement most especially in country like Nigeria, where most researchers are yet to show interest in the construct.

4. Parental Involvement and Academic Performance

On parental involvement and academic achievement, studies have shown to date that the two constructs seems to be positively related. Findings have demonstrated that parent’s involvement in the education of the children has been found to be of benefit to parents, children, and schools (Tella and Tella 2003; Campbell, 1995; Rich, 1987). Rasinki and Fredrick’s (1988) concluded that parents play an invaluable role in laying the foundation for their children’s learning; Zang and Carrasquillo (1995) also similarly remarked that when children are surrounded by caring, capable parents and are able to enjoy nurturing and moderate competitive kinship, a foundation for literacy is built with no difficulty. Cotton and Wikelund (2005) ably capped it by asserting that the more intensively parents are involved in their children’s learning; the more beneficial are the achievement effects. Thus, it is believed that when parents monitor homework, encourage participation in extracurricular activities, are active in parents–teacher
associations, and help children develop plans for their future; children are more likely to respond and do well in school.

Based on the results of Sixty-six studies, Henderson and Berla (1994) were of the opinion that repeated evidence has confirmed that the most accurate predictor of student achievement is the extent to which the family is involved in the child’s education, and not the family's level of income. As a matter of fact, McMillan (2000a) noted that parental pressure has a positive and significant effect on public school performance. This becomes particularly obvious when the exactness of the parental pressure is brought to bear on the children’s academic performance.

Similarly, Schickedanz (1995) also reported that children of passive parents were found to perform poorly academically. Valez in Ryan (2005) reported that academic performance is positively related to having parents who enforce rules at home. The obviousness of the research findings reported in this study is that family involvement improves facets of children’s education such as daily attendance (e.g. Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Simon, 2000), student achievement (e.g. Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Sheldom & Epstein, 2001a, Simon, 2000; Van Voorhis, 2001) behaviour (e.g. Sheldom & Epstein, 2001b; Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Simon, 2000) and motivation (e.g. Cotton & Wikelund, 2001; Brooks, Bruno & Burns, 1997). It is on this note that (Deutsher and Ibe, n.d*) posited it was expected that parent involvement would have a large role on children’s performance. The foregoing, have shown that one of the greatest barriers to high academic achievement for a good number of students, is lack of parental involvement in children’s education.

In sum, research has shown that parents do want to get along with their children’s education knowing fully well that such involvement could promote better achievement.

However, parents need a better little direction as to how they can effectively do this. According to a magazine reports (2002), six types of programs could be utilized by schools to build strong parental skills. These are: one, school can assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills; two, schools can communicate with families about school programs and students progress and needs; three, school can work to improve families as volunteers in school activities; four, schools can encourage families to be involved in learning activities at home; five, schools can include parents as participants in important schools decisions, and six, schools can coordinate with business and agencies to provide resources and services for families, student, and the community. The importance of these programmes further attest to the fact that student’s academic performance is dependent upon the parent-school bond. Thus the importance of parental involvement on academic performance cannot be overemphasised. The stronger the relationship, especially between the parents and their wards’ education, the higher the academic achievement.

Adeyemo (2005) saw reason in this by stressing that there is need to foster home school partnership. In his attempt to give more meaning to his contribution on parental involvement and children’s education, (Epstein, 1997) put up a model in which he analysed how children learn and grow through three overlapping spheres of influence: family school and community. According to him, these three spheres must form partnership to best meet the needs of the child. Epstein (1997) again identified six types of involvement based on the relationships between the families, school and community. These are: parenting (skills), communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. He stressed it clearly that these six types of involvement need to be included to have successful partnerships (between the home and the school). Baker and Soden (1997) remarked that much of the research that examined the relationships between parent involvement and children’s education assesses parent involvement by utilizing one particular measure, such as counting the number of parents that volunteer, coming to meetings, or coming to parent-teacher conferences. Other studies utilized measures that consists of a view closed-ended questions that target particular aspect of parent – involvement and often focus on the number of times parents participate in some particular events (Goldring & Shapira, 1993; Griffith, 1996; Grolnick & Slowiczek, 1994, Zellman & Waterman, 1998). According to Baker and Soden (1997), this type of measure does not allow for a rich picture of parent involvement, nor generate new ideas.
References


A. Imbrosciano & R. Berlach, Teacher perception of the relationships between intelligence, student behaviour, and academic achievement(2003).


Williams, W.M., & Sternberg, R.J. Group Intelligence: Intelligence, 12, 351-377(1988).