Emotional Awareness and School Connectedness: A Preliminary Study Among Students in Indonesia

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Can emotional awareness facilitate school connectedness? Research Questions: Can emotional awareness facilitate school connectedness? Purpose of the Study: To examine whether emotional awareness can facilitate school connectedness. Research Methods: Three hundred seventy two junior high school students, ages 13-16, completed measures on school connectedness (α=0.773 17 items) and emotional awareness (α=0.704 16 items). Findings: The result indicates that students’ general perception of their relationship to school can be explained by their capability of identifying their own and others’ emotions. Conclusions: This study shows that the students’ general perception of their relationship to school can be explained by their capability of identifying their own and others’ emotions.

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Keywords: School connectedness; emotional awareness

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1. Introduction

School connectedness, is the general perception of students about their relation with school (Anderson-Butcher, Amorose, Iachini, & Ball, 2013), which is essential for students and should be an attentuative subject among the school board. A series of studies on junior and high school students indicates improvement within the quality, quantity and strong school connectedness experiences are related to the increase of grades, high academic performance and graduates among high school students.

Kaminski, Puddy, Hall, Cashman, Crosby, & Ortega (2010) found that school connectedness has become one of the significant predictors for self directed violence among adolescents. Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry (2003) also found that school connectedness as one of the potential intervention strategies for peer harassment prevention program. Loukas, Ripperger-Suhler, & Horton (2009) found that adjustment problems among early adolescents can be predicted significantly by school connectedness. McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum (2002) perceives school connectedness as a protective factor related to important school outcomes.

Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins (2004) has emphasized the importance of school connectedness in promoting a healthy development and to prevent problematic behaviors. The importance of the students’ connectedness to school within the context of a prevention program has also been stated by Jonson-Reid (2009) by naming it as connection to school as an ounce of prevention. For instance Jonson-Reid (2009) showed result of a study that promoting change within the school environment, especially those that are related to students' feeling of connectedness, as a more effective prevention strategy compared to the efforts in identifying each students needs. Davis-Alldritt (2012) stated that school connectedness, together with parent engagement, as an essential factor for the adolescents’ health and achievement.

A preliminary study showed that school connectedness has still become a problem for the students in Indonesia (Kurniawan, 2014). Only 13,7% of the students reported often and always felt being an essential part of their school; only 19,1% has reported that they often and often felt that their opinions are important by their school peers, and only 20,7% students felt that the school members are often and always attentuative to their achievements. As much as 33,9% of the students reported that the school members never and also not very often knowing their capability to accomplish certain tasks successfully, and 61,8% of the students admitted to never or not very often being involved in several activities in their school.

This lack of school connectedness found in Indonesian students are assumed to be related to the poor ability to understand one’s feelings, known as emotional awareness. Emotional awareness refers to an attentional process that is interconnected with some interpretative and evaluative functions. This attentional process not only enables us to monitor our emotions, but also to differentiate between various emotions in a qualitative sense; to locate their antecedents; and to acknowledge the physiological correlates of the emotion experience for what they are (Rieffe, Oosterveld, Miers, Terwogt, and Lyon, 2008). Low emotional awareness has been related to alexithymia that is a condition of individuals who are unable to identify their own feelings; they also have trouble identifying the emotional state of others (Khodabakhsh, 2012). This leads to many social adjustment problems. Low emotional awareness predicted both depressive and anxiety symptoms for up to one year follow-up. These findings suggest that emotional awareness may constitute a transdiagnostic risk factor for the development and/or maintenance of symptoms of depression and anxiety, which has important implications for youth treatment and prevention programs (Abela, Elias, Selby, 2010). From depression and anxiety can lead to many problematic school problems such as low achievements, victimization among peers, eating problems and at its extreme, drug use among students.

On the same platform of problematic behaviors, poor emotional awareness and lack of school connectedness has been strongly related to problematic behavior among adolescents. In previous studies, the problems of the lack of school connectedness and poor emotion awareness among adolescents has lead to several common problems. As stated above, the lack of school connectedness among adolescents is found to be significant predictors for self directed violence among adolescents (Kaminski, Puddy, Hall, Cashman, Crosby, & Ortega, 2010). Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins (2004) has emphasized the importance of school connectedness in promoting a healthy development and to prevent problematic behaviors.

This study is aimed to understand the whether emotional awareness can promote school connectedness. This study tested the hypothesis that emotional awareness has a positive correlation with school connectedness.
2. Methods: Participants and Measures

This study was conducted towards 372 respondents, 154 male and 218 female junior high school students ages 13-16 years old. School connectedness was measured by Psychological Sense of School Membership (Goodenow, 1993; $\alpha=0.773$) while emotional awareness by Emotional Awareness Questionnaire (Lahaye et al, 2011; $\alpha=0.704$).

3. Results

**Table 1. Testing the Hypothesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>$r^2$</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Awareness *</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Connectedness</td>
<td>0.436</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson product moment was used in analyzing the data. The study showed that there is a significant correlation between school connectedness and emotional awareness with $(p<0.000), r=0.436$. The result indicates that students’ general perception of their relationship to school can be explained by their capability of identifying their own and others’ emotions.

**Table 2. Correlation Based on Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Male (N=154)</th>
<th>Female (N=218)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>$r^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Awareness *</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Connectedness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional analysis was conducted to show the strength correlation of the two variables based on gender. In explaining emotional awareness with connectedness, male students showed more strength (22%) than the female students (17%).

4. Discussion

The aim of the study is to obtain an empirical proof of the correlation of emotional awareness and school connectedness. The finding can be seen in Table 1. The hypothesis of this study which assumes that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional awareness and school connectedness is accepted. This indicates that the degree of the students’ capability to analyze, to be attentuative, to differentiate and to recognize one’s and other’s emotions has a positive role in developing a positive perception of students towards their school.

Results of this study in general is align with previous findings, for instance Van Rooy & Viswesvaran (2004), found that emotion competence facilitates social, academic, and professional performance. Roffey (2008), stated emotion literation can increase students’ well being. Findings in this study also shows that there is an effect of gender towards the relational strength among emotional awareness and school connectedness of students. The role of emotional awareness towards students’ school connectedness is stronger among the male (can explain the variation of school connectedness as much as 22%) than the female students (as much as 17%). The different findings is probably due to the socialization of emotional competence that is different among the male and female
students (Sanchez-Nunez, Fernandez-Berrocal, Montanes, & Latorre, 2008).

References


