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Correlate of social problem-solving and adjustment among secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria

Ogoemeka a *, Obioma Helen a

* Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, +234, Nigeria

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between social problem solving and adjustment of senior secondary III students. A total of 300 students of both sexes were randomly selected from 3 local governments of Ondo state. The participants responded to a standardized instrument with seven valid scales; these are: social problem solving, adjustment, emotional intelligence, Ibadan creativity Assessment, Self-Efficacy, Social Support, and Cognitive Processing inventory. Using Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression Procedure, the result indicated that the five independent variables correlated with each other and when put together, were effective in predicting adjustment and social problem-solving except social support. Similarly, when the variables are taken individually, only creativity was a potent predictor of social problem-solving while creativity and cognitive ability were strong predictors of adjustment. On the basis of these findings, it was recommended that intervention programme should be organized for students for improving their emotional intelligence, creativity, cognitive ability, self efficacy and problem solving skills.

Keywords: Social Problem –Solving; Adjustment; Creativity; Emotional Intelligence; Self Efficacy and Cognitive Ability

Introduction

The change and development in the different spheres of life have further compounded the problem individuals face. To get on with life therefore, people, both adolescents and adults need to adjust to fit into the changing times. Parts of the adjustment process would be the ability to provide solution to problems. But some of the problems are complex and man is limited and may not have all the resources to solve some of the problems. That is why sometimes individuals need the services of qualified guidance counsellor. For one to be fully able to solve his problems, the person must be able to adjust. (Ogoemeka, 2007).

Consequently, individuals, especially adolescents in schools need a relatively calm and conducive situation to be able to solve these problems. Thus, Tyler (1969 as cited in Okeke 1996), asserts that it is in the relatively calm, non threatening atmosphere that such a person is most likely to be able to face confusions courageously, as well as to sort out from the ideas and values he has been exposed to, such that he will know the ones which are valid for him and thus to come out with a workable philosophy of life. This is the reason this study centres on the relationship between social problem solving and adjustment of secondary school adolescents.

It should be noted that the only way by which learners can meaningfully contribute their quota to nation building is by adjusting properly to every situation and solving day to day problems. For this reason, whatever that can be

* Ogoemeka, Obioma Helen,. Tel.: +2348036549639; fax: +2348055460993.
E-mail address: ogoemobih@aceondo.edu.
done to facilitate the improvement in the adjustment and the social problem-solving skills of students should be done without looking back. To make out of a whole individual, a worthwhile social problem solving skill and adjustment are of utmost importance. When a student has the confidence and belief in venturing and completing a task, and coping with the ever changing environment, he can boast of bright performance and attainment of life goals (Canter, 2004). In other words, social problem solving and adjustment are pre-requisites, for academic success and achievement. In relation to this, some researchers like Priester and Clum, (1993) had reported that effective problem solvers tend to have a more internal locus of control, irrational thoughts, and more confidences about making ability than ineffective problem solvers.

Emotional intelligence (EI) has also been found to play a role on individual continued success and achievement. According to Wong & Low, (2002), EI has a relationship with satisfaction and the ability to handle stresses. Sanna (1997) submitted that, people with high score on self-efficacy have been reported of coming up with solutions over a given task. It has been the belief of people that the quality of thinking determined the quality of human prosperity and well being, to this, Akinboye (2003) opined that the more creative and innovative a person is, the more self-reliant he becomes to enrich the quality of his own life and the community at large. That is to say that someone who is creative is believed to handle problems without much stress.

For this very reason, the study focuses on investigating the association between social problem-solving and adjustment. Furthermore, it goes on to find out the predictive capacity of the independent variables on the dependent variables.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to guide the conduct of this study:

1. What is the pattern of relationship between the independent and dependent variables (social problem solving and adjustment)?
2. What is the composite effects of the independent variables (Emotional intelligence, Self-efficacy, Social support, Creativity and Cognitive ability) on the dependent variables (Social problem-solving)?
3. What is the composite effects of the independent variables (Emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, social support, creativity and cognitive ability) on the dependent variable (adjustment)?
4. What is the relative contributions of each of the independent variables to social problem solving?
5. What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to adjustment?

Method

Data and Sample

Data from the present study come from standardized test instruments (questionnaire) for measuring social problem-solving, Adjustment, Emotional intelligence, creativity, self efficacy, social support and cognitive ability.

A total number of 300 senior secondary school 3 students (140 boys, 160 girls) (M age 16.8) were used for the study. The students were randomly selected from a whole population. A representative sample of ten (10) schools in the designated area were randomly selected from a total of twenty (20) schools in the area. Thirty (30) students were randomly selected from each of ten (10) selected schools amounting to a total of three hundred (300) students.

Measures

Measures in the present study include responses to social problem solving scale (SPSS), which is a 20 items scale in a likert format ranging from strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1 to strongly Agree (SA) = 5.; An Adjustment Scale (AS) of 20 items in a 5 likert format; Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), a thirty three (33) item scale in a 5 point Likert format; Ibadan Creativity Assessment Scale (ICAS), a 88 item structured in a 5 point likert format (1 = very much like me, 2 = unlike me, 3 = not decided, 4 = like me and 5 = very much like me). It has four subsections, ideative flexibility (21 items), ideative originality (25 items) ideative fluency (25 items) and creative motivation (27 items). A Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDNSES), it has a subsections, Self-Appraisal (9 items), Occupation information (11 items) Problem solving (7 items), Making plans (6 items), Goal setting (5 items) all ranging from 1 = if you are not sure (NS) to 5 = if you are very sure (VS). Finally, responses from Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviour (ISSB) and Cognitive Processing Inventory (CPI) were collected also.
The instruments used for the study has the internal consistency with Crombach alpha ranging from 0.71 to 0.78 and test retest reliability ranging from 0.80 to 0.86.

**Procedure**

The researcher and two research assistants distributed and collected the completed questionnaires from the participants who willingly volunteered to be used for the study.

**Data Analysis**

Relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables were ascertained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. Similarly, data on the predictive ability of the variable were analyzed using Multiple Regression Statistics. In addition, the t-test statistics and standard deviation were used.

**Results**

**Table I: Correlation Matrix showing the intercorrelation between social problem-solving, Emotional intelligence, Creativity, Self efficacy, Social support and cognitive ability.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Problem Solving</th>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Self Efficacy</th>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Cognitive Ability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Problem Solving</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>.169**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>.255**</td>
<td>.502**</td>
<td>.525**</td>
<td>.433**</td>
<td>.577*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Efficacy</td>
<td>.117*</td>
<td>.542**</td>
<td>.377**</td>
<td>.441**</td>
<td>.912467</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.453**</td>
<td>.377**</td>
<td>.441**</td>
<td>.912467</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Ability</td>
<td>.157**</td>
<td>.544**</td>
<td>.386**</td>
<td>.441**</td>
<td>.912467</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>60.1733</td>
<td>119.2067</td>
<td>294.0700</td>
<td>139.7500</td>
<td>91.2467</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Dev.</td>
<td>10.1821</td>
<td>20.3023</td>
<td>43.4644</td>
<td>27.1039</td>
<td>27.1036</td>
<td>17.5257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, correlation co-efficient between social problem-solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, self-efficacy, social support and cognitive ability were positive and significant. However, results revealed that stronger positive relationships exist between cognitive ability and social support ($r = .577*$) as well as cognitive ability and emotional intelligence ($r = .544**$).

**Table II: Relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of social problem solving.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>40.920</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>9.222</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>2.451E-02</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>5.639E-02</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>-2.305E-02</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>-.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>-5.978E-03</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Ability</td>
<td>4.263E-02</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.976</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result displayed in table II, it was observed that only creativity made independent significant to the prediction of social problem-solving ($\beta = .241$, t value=3.5 P < .05), while others did not.

**Table III: Contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of Adjustment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardised Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>35.628</td>
<td>4.987</td>
<td>7.144</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accruing from the result displayed in table III above, it was observed that creativity and cognitive ability made separate significant contribution to the prediction of adjustment. Creativity contributed ($\beta = .236$, t-value =3.631, $P < .05$), then cognitive ability ($\beta = .217$, t = 3.097, $P < .05$) while others did not.

**Discussion**

The analysis of the relationship among social problem solving, emotional intelligence, creativity, self efficacy, cognitive ability as shown in the correlation matrix in table I indicates that there is a positive and significant correlation among variables. With regards to emotional intelligence, the findings is in line with Lopes, Salovey, Cote, and Beers (2005) which established that emotional intelligence has a strong and positive relationship with social problem solving. Demis, Milich and Demer (2002) indicated in their study that there was a significant correlation between figural creativity and problem solving skills. Similarly, Sanna (1997) found that people with high score in self efficacy reported high capacity of coming up with solution and adjustment to any situation.

From the result in table II, it was revealed that creativity was the only potent predictor of social problem-solving while others were not.

By the nature of the construct of creativity, it is expected that a person who displays optimal functionality in special ways as well as inventing novel things will have a strong positive problem solving skills. This finding is in congruence with the empirical works of (Deliz et al; 2007; Demiss, Milich and Demer, 2002) who identified a positive and significant correlation between creativity and adjustment, with creativity making a relative contribution of $Z = 0.29; P < 0.01$. This finding indicates a significant predictive ability of creativity on adjustment. This shows than an individual will only manifest his creative potentials when the environment is suitable and enabling. The present finding was also supported by (Animashaun, 2002). In a place like school setting and classroom where academic success depends on myriads of factors, creativity cannot be overemphasized.

**Recommendations**

Education is a way of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitude and general development that last from cradle to grave. It is also an important tool for national development. To achieve this, students should be provided with favourable environment in which these variables are adequately explored.

Furthermore, teachers should give students challenging tasks that will enable them make appropriate use of their brain which in turn helps in acquiring cognitive abilities.

School management should provide problem-solving interventions for students. For this, Elliot and Shewchuk (2003) submitted that problem-solving interventions have been effective in promoting self management skills, alleviating depression among individuals.

**References**

De moss, K., Milich, R., & De Mers, S. (2002). Gender Creativity, Depression, and Attributional Style in Adolescents with High Academic Ability. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 21 (4) 455+


