

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COUNSELLORS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, STUDY HABITS AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNITY COLLEGES IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined the relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence, study habits and school attendance of students in Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The correlation survey design was used for the study. Literature related to the work was reviewed accordingly. From the population of 23,524; a sample of 480 respondents comprising of 427 college students and 53 college counsellors was drawn using the multi-stage and random sampling techniques respectively. Two instruments, namely; Emotional Intelligence Scale and Academic Adjustment Scale developed by the researchers were used for data collection. Validation and reliability tests were done on the instruments with the overall Cronbach alpha coefficient of .91. Mean ratings and Standard Deviations were used in answering the research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence and improvement of college students' study habits and improvement in school attendance of students of Federal Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria. It was recommended that courses on component of emotional intelligence should be integrated in the counsellor training curriculum, and aptitude test be administered in screening counsellors' emotional intelligence status prior to employment. It was recommended among others that every counsellor training institutions should have a functional counselling unit to assist upgrade school counsellors with emotional intelligence. In this way, they will improve significantly on the study habits of college students. Secondly, school counsellors should interface regularly with school administrators, teachers and parents to improve school attendance by enhancing felicitating learning environment. This could be done at Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings of the colleges and other fora.

Keywords: Counsellor, Emotional Intelligence, Study habits, School attendance

Introduction

By nature, college life is challenging to students, and it can be hard to keep up with the increased academic demands. This posits a clarion call for the use of emotionally intelligent counsellors in helping students to achieve success by imbibing good study habits and improvement in school attendance. According to Ikpa (2015), emotional intelligence is 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*. Emotionally intelligent counsellors by training and work schedules are positioned to offer interventions to students' educational, vocational and persona-social difficulties to facilitate healthy adjustment and development. They provide information that leads to self-awareness, self-discipline, improved school attendance and study habits needed for the development of skills and competences needed for adjustment and self-actualization.

The National Council of Education has seen the revitalization of guidance counselling programme in schools and colleges in Nigeria as one of the turn-around strategies to address the challenges of students' academic adjustment in the educational sector. However, the inescapable question is: to what extent has counsellors in the counselling programme been able to achieve the stated purpose?

Therefore, the rationale for undertaking this research on relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence, study habits and improvement in school attendance of students of Federal Government Unity Colleges in North Central Nigeria is expedient.

Akume, Igbo and Tor-Anyiin (2008), decry how the persistent inability of the graduates of post-primary and post-secondary schools to demonstrate the acceptable level of learning and competence, seem to pose a critical question on the effectiveness of the school counsellors in the delivery of the goals of guidance: We now have engineers who cannot successfully execute any project and teachers who cannot make correct sentences in or outside the classroom environment. In addition to the above, some of the certificates obtained in Nigeria are currently treated with contempt outside the shores of this country (p.100).

The above may have other far reaching implications both on the students, parents and society such as discouragement of genuine learning, low self-esteem, low intellectual capacity and skill acquisition, dishonest and lazy citizenry, poor labour force and low economic development. An emotionally intelligent school counsellor should perceive this inability in the students early and help them with necessary skills to mitigate and fast tract adjustment process.

Emotional intelligence, being one of the expected personality characteristics of counsellors, is capable of making or marring the counselling process. Emotional intelligence of counsellors greatly depends on counsellors' ability to understand emotions and effectively manage emotions, in others and themselves. The knowledge, skills, and abilities now known as emotional intelligence is likely to therefore, influence every aspect of counsellors' working lives. The emotionally intelligent counsellor may not yield to the many problems, pressure and excuses encountered on the field of work as it appears the case today.

As is the case with all constructs, several schools of thought exist which aim to most accurately describe and measure the notion of emotional intelligence. At the most general level, emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others (Goleman, 2001). Salovey and Mayer (1990), who originally used the term "emotional intelligence" in published writing, initially defined emotional intelligence as: *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*. Later, these authors revised their definition of emotional intelligence, the current characterization now being the most widely accepted. Emotional intelligence is thus defined as: *The ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions, and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth* (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence is significantly found to correlates with academic achievement (Adeyemo, 2007). This implies that, emotionally intelligent counsellor may be very helpful to students in their academic pursuits.

A good study habit is defined in terms of the student's way of study whether systematic, efficient or inefficient. Good study habits are perceived to be the determinants of the academic performance of students. That is why efforts are made to develop and improve study habits in students by the effective school counsellor. Research findings have revealed that there is a strong connection between the students' study habits and their academic performance. Good study habits lead to good academic performance but bad and defective study habits result to poor academic performance. These good study habits can be improved by a highly emotional intelligent counsellor (Adeyemi, 2007). According to Fabgenle and Elegheleye (201), a good study habit leading to good academic performances motive and increases school attendance of college students.

Statement of the Problem

It is hoped that the degree to which a school counsellor understands and manage himself and the college students will correlates significantly with students' study habits and school attendance. Research findings in the business sector indicate that leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence are more successful than others in leading their companies (Feist & Barron, 1996). Education being foundational to the success of the government's overall development strategy is still saddled with many challenges, including academic issues of students. A successful early academic adjustment of college students to school environment might enable them to complete their studies successfully on time. However, students' inability to adjust to the school environment is still a persistent problem facing education in Nigeria. The underlying factors that influence students' study habits and school attendance at the post primary school level have not received adequate research.

The National Council of Education has seen the revitalization of guidance counselling programme in schools and colleges throughout the States and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in Nigeria as one of the turn-around strategies to address the challenges of adjustment in the educational sector. For the aim and

objectives of establishing guidance programme in a school system is to help individual students attain those goals, which will result in positive changes in their lives and academic achievement. However, it is clear that establishing guidance programme in schools and being able to attain positive and practical results are two different things altogether. The inescapable question is: to what extent have the counsellors and their counselling programme been able to achieve the stated purpose?

Globally, some studies have also indicated that school guidance services offered in schools and colleges are not effective in achieving study habits and school attendance of college students. (Maluwa-Banda, 1998). Therefore, the rationale for undertaking this research on relationship between counsellor emotional intelligence, study habits and school attendance of students of Federal Government unity colleges in North Central Nigeria is expedient.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence, study habits and school attendance of students of Federal Government Unity Colleges in North-Central Nigeria. Specifically, this study is designed to:

- i. Determine the relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence and study habits of unity college students in North-Central Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence and school attendance by unity college students in North-Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- i. What is the mean rating of counsellors' emotional intelligence and study habits of unity college students in North-Central Nigeria?
- ii. What is the mean rating of counsellors' emotional intelligence and school attendance of unity college students in North-Central Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:

- Ho1. Counsellor's emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with study habits among unity college students in North-Central Nigeria.
- Ho2. Counsellor's emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with School attendance of unity college students in North-Central Nigeria

Methodology

Correlation survey design was employed for this study. The design provides information from a representative sample that is useful in determining the relationships between variables as they exist (Emaikwu, 2006). Based on this, the design is appropriate to determine the relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence, study habits and school attendance of students in Federal Government Unity Colleges in North-Central Nigeria.

The total population of the study was 23,524 comprising 23,441 college students, and 83 college counsellors from 24 Federal Government Unity Colleges in North-Central Nigeria (FRN, 2012). The sample size of this study was 480 respondents comprising of 427 college students and 53 college counsellors was taken from Federal Government Unity Colleges in two states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in North-Central Nigeria.

Multi-stage and random sampling techniques were used. Initially, purposive sampling was used to select two States and FCT. The second stage involved proportionate stratified random sampling technique where the population was divided into strata for sample selection. To this end, Jorgen (2005) proportional allocation formula was used (See Appendix F). Purposive sampling was used to select the students' respondents. Students' sample was only taken from the Junior Secondary School (JSS) 2 and 3; Senior Secondary School (SSS) 1 and 2 since JSS1 had not yet experienced the services of the college counsellors long enough for meaningful assessment of their academic adjustment. SSS3 students were not taken as sample because they may not be found in the event of re-test exercise. Random sampling was then used to choose the individual respondents from JSS2-3 and SSS1-2 class by class. Benue, Nasarawa

and FCT schools were taken as sample because they have the largest population of students and counsellors. To arrive at the sample, Glenn (2012) formula for determining sample size from a population was used.

Two instruments were used for the study. The researcher adapted Afolabi (2004) Emotional Intelligence Scale to assess the emotional intelligence of college counsellors. The 25- item self-report scale solicits information on the five levels of emotional intelligence, which include: empathic response, mood regulation, interpersonal skills, internal motivation and self-awareness. The scale was scored on a 5- point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 indicating 'Strongly Agree'. The scale has internal reliability Cronbach's Alpha of .90 and the split half reliability using the Spearman- Brown formula yielded .78 coefficient. The scale was modified thus: given a name (Counsellor Emotional Intelligence Scale). The acceptable mean score of 3.00 was taken. Any item with a value of 3.00 and above was considered a positive score.

The second instrument was a researcher-developed instrument titled: Psycho-Academic Adjustment Scale (PAAS), which was administered on Federal Government Unity College students to assess their study habits and school attendance which was correlated with the result of counsellors' self-assessment of emotional intelligence. The instrument has 10 items which was rated on 4 point values of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) and weighed as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was divided into two (2) sections: Section A elicits responses on the study habits of unity college students. Section B elicits responses on school attendance of unity college students. Any statement with a mean score below 2.50 was not significant while scores from 2.50 and above was accepted.

Result of Findings

The data presented in the following tables were analyzed using mean and Pearson's Product Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) to answer research questions and hypotheses respectively.

Research Question 1: What is the mean rating of counsellors' emotional intelligence and study habits of college students in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Rating of Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence and Study Habits of College Students in North-Central Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Study Habits	374	3.39	.34
Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence	53	3.09	.28

Table 1 shows the cluster mean of counsellors' emotional intelligence and study habits of college students in North Central Nigeria as 3.39 with standard deviation of .34 while the cluster mean of counsellors' emotional intelligence is 3.09 with StD of 0.28. This means that counsellors' emotional intelligence is positively correlated with self-esteem of college students in North-Central Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the mean rating of counsellors' emotional intelligence and school attendance by college students in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Rating of Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence and School Attendance by College Students in North-Central Nigeria.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
School Attendance	374	3.16	.53
Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence	53	3.09	.28

Table 2: Mean Rating of Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence and School Attendance by College Students in North-Central Nigeria.

From Table 2, it can be seen that the cluster mean of counsellors' emotional intelligence and school attendance by students in North-Central Nigeria is 3.16 with standard deviation of .53 while the cluster mean of counsellors' emotional intelligence is 3.09 with StD of 0.28. This means that counsellors' emotional intelligence is positively correlated with school attendance of students in North-Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1: Counsellors' emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with study habits among college students in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation coefficient of Test of Opinion on Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence and Study Habits among College Students in North-Central Nigeria

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Pearson Correlation	(2-tailed) Sig. Remarks
Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence	3.09	.28	53	-.065	.65
Study Habits	3.39	.34	374		Not Significant

Table 3, indicates (r) value of -.065 and P = .65. Since P .065 is greater than .05 the null hypothesis which states that counsellors' emotional intelligence has relationship with study habits among college students in North-Central Nigeria is accepted. This shows that there is relationship between counsellor emotional intelligence and study habits among college students. However, since the P is greater than .05, the relationship is not statistically significant. It is therefore, important for counsellor trainers to ensure the enhancement of college counsellors' emotional intelligence for the academic health of the college students by ensuring high level of emotional intelligence of counsellor trainees. Goleman (1995), gives legitimacy to counsellor education and re-training in emotional intelligence.

Hypothesis 2: Counsellors' emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with school attendance of college students in North-Central Nigeria.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Table of Test of Opinion on Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence and Improvement in the School Attendance of College Students in North-Central Nigeria

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Pearson Correlation	(2-tailed) Sig. Remarks
Counsellors' Emotional Intelligence	3.09	.28	53	-.083	.56
Improvement of School Attendance	3.16	.53	374		Not Significant

Table 4, indicates (r) value of .083 and P = .56. Since P .56 is greater than .05 the null hypothesis which states that counsellors' emotional intelligence has relationship with school attendance of college students in North-Central Nigeria is accepted. This shows that there is relationship between counsellors' emotional intelligence and school attendance of college students. However, since the P is greater than .05, the relationship is not statistically significant. This finding lends much support and credibility to achieving a positive school climate through leaders with high emotional intelligence and Fabgenle and Elegbeleye (2014), who found that the average attendance scores are proportional to their examination scores in Osun State.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the results of the analysis of the two research questions and two hypotheses of the study, the discussion of the findings is as follows:

The first finding indicated that there is a positive relationship between counsellor emotional intelligence and study habits of college students in North-Central Nigeria, which means that the interaction between the college students and the emotionally intelligent school counsellor has helped them improve on their study habits. This was not considered statistically significant. Good study habits lead to good academic performance but defective study habits result to poor academic performance. Good study habits are a product of many factors, which include regular attendance to classes, taking of notes, doing of assignments punctually to class, involvement in sports, good time management, setting of definite academic goals to be achieved and development of good internet skills to study. These findings agree with Adeyemo (2007), who established that good study habits are necessary for a college student to excel academically.

To achieve academic adjustment, counsellors assess students' abilities provide effective educational guidance services and provide services for parents to learn about their children's development and progress in school. Related to the above finding, Carnevale and Derocher (2003), and Abid (2006), view that school counselling helps students develop education strategies that will allow them to meet academic requirements and at the same time develop soft skills and attitudes that are typically learned in applied contexts. Student's study pattern and attitude to study determine to a large extent academic performance or failure in learning. Nwadinigwe and Azuka- Obieke (2012), confirmed positive relationship between emotional intelligence skills and academic achievement such that developing emotional intelligence skills of students will lead to enhancement of their study habits of students. Unfortunately, appropriate study habits are seldom taught in schools and the information on the right and wrong ways have been ignored. This has resulted to the insignificant relationship between counsellor emotional intelligence and students' study habits in colleges in North-Central Nigeria. The reason for this finding may be the low rate of school counsellors' emotional intelligence. Psychologists have found that, the higher the emotional intelligence of counsellors, the higher their rate of effectiveness in their interaction with the college students (Carnevale & Derocher, 2003; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Abid, 2006; Aju & Karim, 2014). It is therefore, important for counsellor trainers to ensure the enhancement of college counsellors' emotional intelligence for the academic health of the college students by ensuring high level of emotional intelligence of counsellor trainees. Goleman (2001), gives legitimacy to counsellor education and re-training in emotional intelligence.

The second finding revealed that there is a positive relationship between counsellor emotional intelligence and improvement of school attendance of college students in North-Central Nigeria, which means that college students have experienced improvement in school attendance due to their interaction with the emotionally intelligent school counsellors. However, the improvement was statistically not significant. Improved school attendance is facilitated by a welcoming school atmosphere, when a college student feels safe at school, rewarded for good attendance at school, experience concern from the class teacher by inquiry when absent at school and parental motivation for good school attendance, all these are achievable in a situation where the school counsellor performs his duties with high emotional intelligence as relating to school staff and parents. This finding agrees with earlier finding by United States Department of Justice (2001), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Evaluation that, students' attendance to school enhances their academic achievement which in turn influences the school attendance behaviour of college students. This finding lends much support and credibility to achieving a positive school climate through leaders with high emotional intelligence and Fabgenle and Elegbeleye (2014), who found that the average attendance scores are proportional to their examination scores in Osun State.

Conclusion

The principal aim of guidance in schools is to utilise its services to assist students achieve academic success. Based on the outcome of this paper, school counsellors should sit up in their statutory responsibility to be emotionally intelligent in encouraging college students to improve on desired study habits and school attendance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Every counsellor training institutions should have a functional counselling unit to assist upgrade school counsellors with emotional intelligence. In this way, they will improve significantly on the study habits of college students
2. School counsellors should interface regularly with school administrators, teachers and parents to improve school attendance by enhancing felicitating learning environment. This could be done at Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings of the colleges and other fora.
3. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should include emotional intelligence skills training in all its conferences so as to upgrade counsellors emotional intelligence.
4. Counselling professionals should develop standard emotional intelligence skill modules for counsellor training institutions in Nigeria in order to increase emotional intelligence of counsellors.

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