

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AS DETERMINANT OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG STUDENTS OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY ZARIA, KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper investigated the relationship of Emotional Intelligence, Socio-Economic Background and Academic Achievement among Students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State Nigeria. Correlation designed was used for the study. Sample size of two hundred and seventy (270) students was drawn from five faculties in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. Hypotheses formulated for the study were tested with Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) and it was revealed from the study that all the hypotheses were rejected. The results showed that significant relationship exists between emotional intelligent and academic achievement ($r = 0.761$, $p = 0.001$). Also, significant relationship exists between socio-economic background and academic achievement ($r = 0.711$, $p = 0.000$). It was therefore recommended that, among others, The University counseling psychologists and lecturers should focus on teaching emotional intelligence as a strategy to develop academic behaviours and attitudes of students at the university. When students are educated to be emotionally intelligent, their general performance can be improved; and parents should give their children the adequate support needed, so as to enhance their academic achievement.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, socio-economic background and students' academic achievement.

Introduction

Education is an important pillar of societal development, shaping individuals and communities while driving progress and development; it is of the most significant outcomes of an academic achievement of students' in tertiary institutions. Academic achievement is the attainment obtained by a child in the lesson taught, which may include experience, knowledge, skill and the likes. The knowledge and skill are measured in student's Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA); the child's good or poor performance does not depend solely on attribute the child is born with, but his family background, social contacts, teachers, overall climate in his school, and assessment procedure.

Academic achievement may be defined as excellence in all academic disciplines, in class as well as co-curricular activities. Cohen and Garcia (2006) define academic achievement as "knowledge attaining ability or degree of competence in school. Task usually measured by standardized test and expressed in a grade or unit based on students' performance/achievement". Cohen and Apfel (2009) refer to academic performance as "the knowledge obtained or skill developed in the school subjects usually designed by the test scores or marks assigned by the teacher". Achievement of student in the classroom takes a central role in the academic development of the students. Parents, teachers and school administrators take cognizance of the academic well-being of the students.

Yardsticks are set by school authorities to measure performance, the standard set by the university will

determine whether a student is performing well or not. In the assessment of performance, Pekrun and Elliot (2006) argued that achievement is the behaviour of an individual that can be directly observed by another individual. Therefore, academic achievement has been seen as a term used for student based on how well they are doing in studies and classes. Academic achievement for university student is also seen as the extent to which a student has achieved his educational goals. This means that the student's academic performance is measured by the extent to which he or she has reached the educational goal he has set for himself. The university measures academic achievement in several ways which include Continuous Assessment Test (C.A.T) and a number of standardized test and examinations (Pekrun & Perry, 2007).

In education, emotions have been considered as supplementary for learning process. It is an essential element of one's personality and also of life. In both personal and professional survival, emotional intelligence plays a significant role. Elias (2004), however, indicated that Emotional Intelligence can be considered as a necessary component of any educational society. He defined it as a set of skills necessary for effective social interaction and classroom success: emotional recognition and regulation, self-control, goal setting, social responsibility, empathy, problem solving, conflict resolution, and skills needed for leadership and effective group participation. Goleman (1996) cited in Aruna (2014) concluded that Emotional intelligence can predict academic success better than traditional measures of intelligence. There are numerous factors that affects Academic achievement of students and one of such is emotional intelligence.

In the span of last twenty year, Emotional Intelligence (EI) concept has become very popular parameter of a person knowledge, skill and abilities in office, profession, school, personal life and overall success. Now it is being considered widely that emotional intelligence is also required for the job satisfaction, motivation, decision taking in adverse situations etc. It is felled now that inclusion of emotional intelligence in higher education is needed because it will makes students able to reduce their academic pressure and in becoming a better decision maker. Emotional intelligence is not only useful for their academic life but also useful for post academic life.

It has, however, been established that despite an individual having the intellectual potential to succeed at institutions of higher learning, he or she may experience difficulty dealing with emotional issues, have poor relationships, and be ineffective in his or her decision making (Goleman 1998 cited in Aruna 2014). These observations, among others, have led to the realization that individuals from changing populations may require more than intellectual abilities to exist and thrive academically. High emotional intelligence can contribute positively to student learning process (Svetlana, 2007). Students low on emotional intelligence may find failure more difficult to deal with, which undermines their academic motivation, (Drago, 2004 cited in Aruna, 2014).

Walsh-Portillo (2011) has reported a significant positive relationship between academic success and higher emotional intelligence on the basis of various studies. Therefore, Ahmad (2012), have asserted that the fundamental purpose of the school, college, and university education that students need is not only to get mastery in academics or subject matter but to study and realize how to manage their emotions, be responsible and empathetic, and get practice to make accurate judgments and sound decisions. Moreover, the students can make alternative choices and deal with conflict, and can play a positive role in the community as constructive, committed and effective citizens.

Jatinder (2014) found significant correlation between Emotional intelligence and Achievement scores while Nelson and Low (2004) in one of their studies emphasized that Emotional intelligence skills have a

great impact on students' achievement and retention especially during transition period of high school graduates in the first year of college. However, Yazici, Seyis and Altun (2011) observed that One of the dimensions of emotional intelligence "being aware of the emotions" was found to be a positive predictor of academic success of students, moreover the academic achievement differed by socio-economic status. Students with higher level of socio-economic income had meaningfully higher academic average than academic average of students with middle socio-economic income and low socio-economic income.

Socio-economic background relates to a combination of an individual's income, occupation and social background. Socio-economic background is a key determinant of success and future life chances. According to Richman, Johnson and Boxham (2006), parent's education is one of the strongest predictor of cognitive performance and academic attainment of students, among other aspects of socio-economic status. Mukherjee (1999) states that socio economic status is used as a measure of an individual's or group's social position in the community. He also reported that mothers' education is the strong predictor of students' academic achievement. Socioeconomic status is a term used by sociologists, economists, and other social scientists to describe the class standing of an individual or group.

It is measured by a number of factors, including income, occupation, and education, and it can have either positive or negative impact on a student's life (Ashley, 2019). Oakes and Rossi (2002) assert that it is a fact that in families where the parents are privileged educationally, socially and economically, they promote a higher level of achievement in their offspring. According to Jeynes (2002), the socio-economic status of a child is usually determined by parental occupational status and income level, and the environment in which the child is brought up. It is also affected by parents' involvement in learning activities and effective parent-teacher relationship. It is understood that low socio-economic status negatively and depressingly affects students' academic motivation and leads to test anxiety due to high additional stress and tension at home, thereby affecting students' academic achievement in the long run. Studies by Eamon (2005) and Jeynes (2002) have established that socioeconomic status affects students' outcome. According to McNeal (2001), socioeconomic status has also been shown to override other educational influences such as parental involvement in their children's schooling. Munir, Faiza, Jamal, Daud and Iqbal (2023) lamented that socio economic status predicted academic outcomes and higher socio-economic students fare better academically.

On the basis of researches quoted it can be said that fair amount of studies have been conducted on Emotional intelligence and Socio-economic status and their correlation with Academic achievement but there is dearth of studies showing predictive value of Emotional intelligence and Socio-economic status on Academic achievement of students. An attempt was made to fill the research gap of the same. The present study aims to throw light by predicting Academic achievement of students in tertiary institution employing the variables Emotional intelligence and Socio-economic status.

Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement among university students has become a growing concern in recent years, particularly within the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions. At Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, one of the largest and most prestigious universities in Sub-Saharan Africa, reports from internal examinations, senate records, and departmental results have consistently shown a rising trend in the number of students with low Cumulative Grade Point Averages (CGPA). According to the 2022/2023 academic session report, more than 35% of undergraduates in various faculties graduated with third-class or pass degrees, and over 15% dropped out due to academic probation and inability to meet minimum

academic requirements.

Several underlying causes have been identified in relation to this disturbing trend. A key contributor is students' socio-economic background, which includes factors such as parental income, educational level, and living conditions. Many students from low-income families struggle with access to textbooks, stable accommodation, nutritious meals, and digital resources—factors that are essential for effective learning in today's academic environment. Furthermore, many students take on part-time work or hustle to support themselves, which significantly reduces the time and energy available for study.

Another critical but often overlooked factor is Emotional Intelligence (EI)—the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions effectively. Studies have shown that students with low emotional intelligence often lack the coping skills necessary to handle academic pressure, peer competition, and personal challenges, leading to burnout, procrastination, low motivation, and poor performance. In ABU, mental health services are limited, and many students do not have access to psychological support, which exacerbates stress-related academic failure.

The effects of poor academic performance are both immediate and far-reaching. At the personal level, students face low self-esteem, delayed graduation, and limited job prospects. At the institutional level, mass failure reflects poorly on the university's reputation and contributes to high attrition rates. Nationally, the issue affects the supply of well-trained professionals and hinders economic growth, especially in a developing country like Nigeria where human capital is critical.

Despite various efforts—such as tutorial programs, the establishment of the Student Counselling Unit, and the introduction of online learning platforms—these interventions have not adequately addressed the root psychological and socio-economic determinants of academic achievement. Existing programs often focus on academic support without addressing emotional wellbeing and family background disparities.

While several studies in Nigeria have explored emotional intelligence or socio-economic background in relation to academic performance, few have simultaneously examined the interaction of both variables within the context of a university environment like ABU. Moreover, there is a dearth of data-driven research that investigates how these two factors jointly contribute to academic outcomes in Northern Nigerian universities.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this critical gap by examining how emotional intelligence and socio-economic background predict academic achievement among students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. By doing so, it aims to inform more holistic interventions that combine academic, emotional, and financial support strategies.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- i. to ascertain the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State-Nigeria.
- ii. to ascertain the relationship between socio-economic background and academic achievement among students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State-Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance:

- i. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among students in the study area.

- ii. There is no significant relationship between socio-economic background and academic achievement among students in the study area.

Methodology

The design adopted in conducting this research is correlation design. The population of this study was made up of 300 level students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Their number stands at eight hundred and eighty-seven (887) students across the five (5) faculties that was randomly selected. The sample of this study is 270 students. This sample is drawn from the entire population of 300 level students which is 887. The selection conforms with the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) prescription. The proportionate sampling technique was used in the allocation of samples to the various five faculties. This is because the faculties differ in their population and to ensure equitable distribution of the sample, a proportionate sampling technique was appropriate. However, the research purposefully targets 300 level students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. These students at 300 level have stayed enough in the University. Three instruments were adopted and used for this study. The instruments are Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII), Socio-Economic Background Inventory (SEBI) and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of students'. To ascertain the validity of the instrument, the researchers submitted the copies to experts in the field of educational psychology for validation. All the instruments were validated to determine the face and content validity, their relevance and appropriateness in the study. The reliability coefficient was established using Cronbach Alpha. Thus, emotional intelligence has the reliability of .763 while socio-economic background scale has the reliability index of .879. The instruments are reliable as both have an appreciable internal consistency.

The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics. Pearson Product Moment Correlation PPMC(r) was used to test the study hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. SPSS version 25.0 was used for the analysis.

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Table 1: PPMC on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement

Variables	N	Mean	Std.dev	df	Correlation matrix	P-value
Emotional Intelligence	270	30.38	12.35	268	0.761**	0.001
Academic achievement	270	3.02	0.589			

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Results of the Pearson product-moment correlation (PPMC) statistics showed that a significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. This is because the computed p-value of 0.001 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance with a correlation index r level of 0.761. The relationship between the two variables is directly proportional. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among students of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is hereby rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between socio-economic background and academic achievement among students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Table 2: PPMC statistics on the relationship between socio-economic background and academic achievement.

Variables	N	Mean	Std.dev	df	Correlation matrix	P-value
Socio economic background	270	50.2593	8.92115	268	0.711**	0.000
Academic achievement	270	3.02	0.589			

***.* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Results of the Pearson product-moment correlation (PPMC) statistics showed that a significant relationship exists between socio-economic background and academic achievement. This is because the computed p-value of 0.000 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r level of 0.711. The relationship between the two variables is directly proportional. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between socio-economic background and academic achievement among students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is hereby rejected.

Discussion

The finding of this study revealed that a significant relationship exists between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. The relationship between the variables is directly proportional. It enables individuals to realize their potential, productivity, possible contribution to the community they live in and to adequately cope with everyday stressful situations. This finding agrees with that of Jatinder (2014) who found significant correlation between Emotional intelligence and Achievement scores while Nelson and Low (2004) in one of their studies emphasized that Emotional intelligence skills have a great impact on students' achievement and retention especially during transition period of high school graduates in the first year of college.

Finding of this study also revealed that a significant relationship exists between socio-economic background and academic achievement. This finding collaborates with that of Munir, Faiza, Jamal, Daud and Iqbal (2023) lamented that socio economic status predicted academic outcomes and higher socio-economic students fare better academically. The finding also agrees with that of Jeynes (2002) who posited that the socio-economic status of a child is usually determined by parental occupational status and income level, and the environment in which the child is brought up. It is also affected by parents' involvement in learning activities and effective parent-teacher relationship. It is understood that low socio-economic status negatively and depressingly affects students' academic motivation and leads to test anxiety due to high additional stress and tension at home, thereby affecting students' academic achievement in the long run.

Conclusion

From the result of this study, it is concluded that emotional intelligence and socio-economic background have significant relationship with academic achievement. Thus, students with high emotional intelligence will show a positive attitude toward learning while students from low socio-economic background will have poor academic achievement and vice versa.

Recommendations

1. The university counselling psychologists and lecturers should focus on teaching emotional intelligence as a strategy to develop academic behaviours and attitudes of students at the university. When students are educated to be emotionally intelligent, their general performance can be improved.
2. Parents should give their children the adequate support needed, particularly in the area of finance. This

will further enhance their academic achievement.

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