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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS A PREDICTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE.

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Abstract

This study used a correlational research design to establish how emotional intelligence predict undergraduate students' social adjustment. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The sample for the study consisted of 582 year 1 regular undergraduate students drawn from the population of the study using a multi-stage random sampling procedure. Two instruments, the Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII), the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-R-21), and the Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ), were used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that, there is a low positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among 100-level undergraduate students in public universities in Anambra State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that the government should prioritize creating a more conducive learning environment for student's social adjustment.

Key words: emotional intelligence, impulsivity and social adjustment.

Introduction

Man is inherently a social being. This underscores why having a positive social adjustment could be very pivotal for his psychological and social well-being. Social adjustment is the achievement of balance in social relationship usually aided by the appropriate application of social skills (Mondal, 2021). As social beings, we live in a society where we have opinions about others and vice versa. Everybody longs to be acknowledged and accepted by significant persons. In order to fit in with others, human beings try to act in conformity with social norms of the society. A person is often referred to as socially adjusted when they can successfully follow or conform to the customs, values, and regulations set by that society as an eligible member of that society. Though, not every member of a society abides by the same laws and rules that govern that society, yet, in order to live as a valued member, one must follow the traditions and principles of that society.

Generally, when a person is able to meet their social needs by living in society through establishing good relations with their surrounding social circumstances, it is referred to as social adjustment. Social adjustment also refers to an individuals' adaptation in social relationships with other people, both inside and outside the school, as reflected in the individual's attitude and behavior (Ansary, Ansary & Adhikari, 2022). Social adjustment is a psychological process, which frequently involves coping with new standards and values. Among the crucial elements of social adjustment are integrating into the social life of a university, a college, a city, and a nation, establishing an environmental network, and regulating social freedoms in a particular context. Therefore, within the learning environment, interactions and relationships that are

built and maintained by first year undergraduate students enhance their social networks, learning relationships, social and cultural skills. In a recent research, Bye, Muller & Oprescu, (2020) opined that social networks and relationships are important to the transition process of students because it enhances their life satisfaction and foster their sense of belonging. One of the main aims of the education system is to help students acquire social adjustment skills, which will help the students to adjust or adapt themselves successfully to different social circumstances. Consequently, teachers, parents, administrators, and all the people who are involved in education need to have proper knowledge or idea about the social adjustment of the students.

Social adjustment is a persistent challenge for students entering a new environment especially, for first-year undergraduates. This is as a result of the challenges faced during transition from secondary school to university where they encounter new environment, teachers, friends, lifestyle and changed academic setup. This can be difficult for some students especially after going through the dependent stage at home or in school where they have to abide by the rules laid down by their parents and the school. From their perspective, university is a time when these controls disappear and they become independent just like adults. According to Ali, Ahmad & Khan (2018), if students do not successfully manage these new social challenges in the university ultimately they become more vulnerable to anxiety and depression. Some student's may engage in some vices such as cultism, carrying of weapons, smoking, illicit sex, ritual killing, internet fraud, excessive drinking and drug addiction. These could be some of the social adjustment problems in the university, and as such the university environment is not always safe for learning because of the maladjustment behaviour

of undergraduate students in the learning environment. They are emotionally unstable, disorganized and may also lack human feelings. Negative behavioral traits exhibited by undergraduate students could lead to violence, aggression, and bullying (Odofin, & Okoh, 2023).

In view of this, Alipio (2020) reported in a study conducted at a higher education institution in Philippines, that there is a higher rate of school dropout due to an inability to adapt to school. He found out that 60% of students who cannot adjust to college drop out early in school. Sahin, Arseven & Kilic (2016) reported that students who cannot establish good relationships with their friends, teachers and school administration, who do not like the school and the subjects have a higher tendency to be absent from school and to drop out of school. Fan & Wolters (2014) also stated that the individual causes of school dropouts include the difficulty to adjust with the school curriculum.

The negative effects of undergraduate students' inability to adjust to the school environment, establish and maintain good relationship with other people, participate positively in school activities such as group projects, and social activities such as other extra-curricular activities offered by the school, could affect their becoming socially adjusted in school. It's possible that this circumstance could lead to major issues at the school, and perhaps could be the reason researchers such as Ababu, Yigzaw, Besene & Alemu (2018), Anyamene, et al, (2019), have worked diligently to ascertain important factors that promote positive social adjustment of individuals in school, especially at the university level. Social adjustment of undergraduates to campus

environment could be influenced by important psychosocial variables or factors which include but not limited to emotional intelligence and impulsivity.

Emotional intelligence is an important variable which could help in the social adjustment of students in the university. Necessary psychosocial factors such as emotional intelligence beliefs are essential for effective coping and possible adjustment in social settings. Many believe that acceptable ideas could be possible without emotions (Oparaji, Igbokwe Ugwude & Okeke-James, 2020). However, serious emotions like self-awareness which is the most significant component of emotional intelligence have shown to have strong connection with good thinking and allows undergraduate students' self-control and ability to deal with rejection and discouragement as reported by Couto & Braga (2015). Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, evaluate, manage ones' emotions, and interact with others (Igbo, Nwaka, Mbagwu & Mezieobi, 2016). A student having good intelligence can adjust well in different situations and can solve problems related with daily life in his or her immediate environment (Nwosu, Chigbu, Etele, Obi & Nwankwo, 2022). Emotional intelligence could be traced to the concept of social intelligence according to Salovey & Mayer in Sadananda *et al* (2015) is described as 'a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, distinguish between them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions'. It emerged from wide range of research looking at how students/individuals perceive, communicate, and use emotions.

Emotional intelligence could be used to control impulses, express empathy and deal with obstacles with resilience and flexibility (Ghaenta & Kumar, 2014). Though

in recent times, the connection between emotional intelligence and the workings of the mind cannot be underestimated, this is because thoughts are produced by the mind and these thoughts function with and within human emotions. In other words, it have the ability to influence and be influenced by emotions. Emotions are more than just feelings. They are the compendium of one's being or deposition as derived from one's circumstances, mood, interactions and relationship with others (Oparaji, *et al*, 2020). However, Oparaji, *et al*, (2020) further stated that there is a common denominator between emotions and thoughts on one hand, and between the mind and the heart on the other hand as they collaborate to support man with positive ideas and sound judgment. An emotionally distressed person they added cannot regulate his emotions or coordinate his mentality even if he shows a high level of intelligence.

Furthermore, a pool of psychological literature have revealed that emotional intelligence is a crucial predictor of learner's capability to successfully regulate, control and manage the constant demands of academic environment (Thomas & Allen, 2020). However, studies investigating this assertion have reported mixed results. For instance, positive association of emotional intelligence has been linked to student's academic and social adjustment (Thomas & Allen, 2020; Zhoc, King, Chung & Chen, 2020). Accordingly, students who demonstrated high level of emotional intelligence also showed high level of retention and persistence in school (Snowden, *et al*, 2018). Moreover, a highly emotional intelligent student is characterized with more adaptive strategies to the learning environment (MacCann, *et al*, 2020), and ability to buffer against negative emotions (Thomas, Cassady & Heller, 2017). In view of this, some researchers found that thoughts generated outside emotions do not often result in

acceptable decisions or correct judgments. In most cases, it is difficult to have good thinking without the support of the emotion. Oparaji, *et al*, (2020) are of the opinion that it is not even necessary to attempt setting aside emotions while trying to create a balance between good thoughts and emotions. On the contrary, it has been noted by another researcher who found that dimensions of emotional intelligence were not associated with academic adjustment of undergraduate students (Engin, 2017). These mixed findings necessitated further investigation on the mechanism through which emotional intelligence impacts on social adjustment of undergraduate university students. Hence, from the perspective of an educator, enhancing the positive learning environment for the students is an important educational goal which could enhance their emotional intelligence. Educators desire students to become autonomous individuals who have strong and positive feelings about themselves as they engage in the unlimited responsibilities and demands of school and society at large, and as such, the present research was formulated to explore the predictive value of emotional intelligence, and undergraduate students' social adjustment in public universities in Anambra state. Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 significance level were formulated by the researchers' to guide the study.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of the relationship that exists between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among 100level undergraduate students'?
2. What is the nature of the regression equation for predicting social adjustment using emotional intelligence as predictor?

Hypotheses

1. Emotional intelligence will not significantly predict 100level undergraduate students' social adjustment in public universities in Anambra State.
2. The regression model (emotional intelligence) will not significantly predict undergraduate students' social adjustment in public universities in Anambra State.

Method

Correlation survey research design was utilize for this study. According to Nworgu (2015), a correlational design is a research design that seeks to establish relationship between two or more variables as well as indicates the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables. The population for this study comprises of 1939 Year 1 regular undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State. The choice of 100-level undergraduate students is based on the fact that they are newly admitted, and having transitioned into the university environment, and may be having difficulties adjusting socially to the new learning environment. Using multi- stage random sampling procedure, 582 students were selected for the study.

Two sets of questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. The two sets of questionnaires are titled: "Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII) and Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ)". The Emotional Intelligence Inventory is a 40-item inventory from a model by Mohapel (2015). It was modified for use in the present study. The EII is divided into 4 sub-sections with 10 items in sub-sections namely;

emotional awareness, emotional management, social emotional awareness and relationship management. The options for each item are weighted 0 to 4 thus; 0 = Never, 1 = Rarely, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always, giving a maximum score of 40 for each subsection. The norm for judging the respective response for the emotional intelligence self-assessment instrument was given as follows: 0 - 53 = area for enrichment, 54 - 106 = effective functioning, 107 – 160 = enhanced skills, respectively.

Also, the Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) developed by Weisman & Paykel (1974) was adapted and modified for this study. The instrument has 28 items assessing the functioning in each of the five role areas (house work; social and leisure activities; relationships with friends, extended family and functioning in the family unit). The instrument is structured on a 5-point scale of Not at all, Occasionally, About half the time, Most of the time, All the time with values 1,2,3,4,5 respectively. In scoring the scale, Poor Adjustment = 23.0 – 57.27, Good Adjustment = 57.50 – 92.0.

Emotional Intelligence Inventory and Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ) were validated for face and content worthiness by 3 experts in Education. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained through pilot testing by administering the EII, BIS and SAQ to a similar group of 50 first year undergraduates in faculty of education at University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Cronbach alpha statistics was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The alpha coefficients got were 0.77 for EII and 0.71 for SAQ.

The instruments were administered by the researchers with the help of 3 research assistants. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination for research question 1 while regression statistical analysis was used for research question 2 and testing for the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: ***Pearson's Correlation among Emotional Intelligence and Social Adjustment among 100level Undergraduate Students (n = 582)***

Variables		1	2	3
1. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	R	1		
	P			
2. SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT	R	.215**	.406**	1
	P	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that the relationship between the two variables was positive relationship. The correlation between emotional intelligence and social adjustment yielded a correlation coefficient (r) = 0.215. This suggests that there was a low positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment.

Table 2: ***Coefficient of Equation for Predicting 100level Undergraduates' Social Adjustment Using Emotional Intelligence (n=582)***

Model	Unstandardized β	SE	Standardized β
(Constant)	24.181	4.993	
Emotional Intelligence	.100	.037	.106

Table 2 shows that the model for predicting 100level undergraduates' social adjustment using their emotional Intelligence was presented in Table 2. The unstandardized and standardized (β) were for emotional intelligence were 0.100 and 0.106; the nature of this equation, therefore, is as presented below:

$$\hat{Y} = b_0 + b_1 X_1$$

$$\hat{Y} = b_{intercept} + b_{emotional\ intelligence} X_{emotional\ intelligence}$$

$$Social\ adjustment = 24.181 + .100 X_{emotional\ intelligence}$$

This suggests that a unit increase in emotional intelligence leads to 0.10 unit increase in social adjustment.

Table 3: Significance of Regression Coefficient Predicting 100level Undergraduates' Social Adjustment Using Emotional Intelligence (n=582)

Model	Unstandardized B	SE	Standardized β	*t*	*p*
(Constant)	24.181	4.993		4.843	.000
Emotional Intelligence	.100	.037	.106	2.698	.007

As shown in Table 3, emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of 100level undergraduate students' social adjustment, t =2.698, p =.0 07. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 4: Test of Significance of Regression Model Emotional Intelligence as Predictor of 100level Undergraduate Students' Social Adjustment

Variables	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	*F*(2,579)	*p*
Emotional Intelligence	.419	.175	.173	61.598	.000

Table 4 above reveals the regression model analysis summary using emotional intelligence as predictor of 100level undergraduate students' social adjustment was significant, F(2,579) = 61.598, p =.000. Since the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was reject.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed a low positive relationship of between emotional intelligence and social adjustment among 100-Level undergraduate students in public universities in Anambra State. This finding aligns with the study of Torbat & Zarei (2018), which reported that there is a positive significant correlation between emotional intelligence and social adjustment, and that emotional intelligence

allows students to adjust positively to social situations. This implies that high levels of emotional intelligence are associated with better social adjustment among 100-level undergraduate students. Emotional intelligence encompasses skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy, which can facilitate effective interpersonal relationships and adaptive social behaviors. These findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional intelligence skills among students to enhance their social adaptation. The findings indicate that an increase in emotional intelligence leads to an increase in social adjustment among 100-level undergraduate students. This finding conforms to the findings of Igbo, Nwaka, Mbagwu & Mezieobi (2016), which revealed the development and improvement of emotional intelligence skills can positively impact students' ability to adapt to their social environment. This suggests that as emotional intelligence levels increase, there is a slight but significant improvement in their ability to navigate social interactions and environments effectively. This underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in shaping students' social adjustment during their early academic experiences.

Moreso, the study demonstrated that regression model with emotional intelligence score accounted for 17.5% of the variance in 100 Level undergraduate students' social adjustment in public universities in Anambra State. This indicates that while emotional intelligence is an important factor, among other variables that contribute to social adjustment. This underscores the influence of emotional intelligence in shaping students' social adaptation processes during their initial year of university education. However, the regression model derived from the study

significantly predicted social adjustment among 100 Level undergraduate students in the public university context in Anambra State.

Conclusion

Our study revealed the association between emotional intelligence and 100 Level undergraduate student's social adjustment in public universities in Anambra State. The findings revealed a low positive relationship between emotional intelligence and social adjustment, it's important to note the strength of this association. This suggests that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to exhibit better social adjustment skills compared to those with lower emotional intelligence.

Additionally, the study demonstrates that an increase in emotional intelligence is positively associated with an improvement in social adjustment. This implies that individuals who enhance their emotional intelligence are likely to experience better social adjustment outcomes.

Importantly, the results indicate that emotional intelligence scores significantly predicted social adjustment, accounting for 17.5% of the variance in this population. In other words, emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of social adjustment in this specific group.

Overall, the regression model used in the study significantly predicts social adjustment among 100 level undergraduate students. These findings highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in facilitating positive social adjustment outcomes, providing valuable insights for educators and individuals seeking to enhance their social skills. Future research could explore this relationship in more detail, examining potential

mediating factors and investigating emotional intelligence interventions to improve social adjustment in this population.

Recommendations

1. Since there is a low positive relationship between 100-level undergraduate student's emotional intelligence and their social adjustment in public universities in Anambra State. It is essential to educate 100 level undergraduate students, about the importance of emotional intelligence in social adjustment. Increasing awareness about the positive impact of emotional intelligence can motivate students to develop and enhance their emotional intelligence skills.
2. School management and lecturers should implement programs or workshops that specifically target the improvement of emotional intelligence among 100 level undergraduates. These programs can provide participants with practical strategies and techniques to develop emotional intelligence skills, which can ultimately lead to improved social adjustment.
3. Incorporate emotional intelligence training into the existing curriculum for 100 level undergraduate students. By integrating emotional intelligence development into academic courses, students can receive structured guidance and support in enhancing their social adjustment skills.
4. Establish support systems within educational institutions to identify and assist students who may struggle with social adjustment. This can involve guidance counselors, mentors, or peer support programs that provide resources and guidance for students to improve their emotional intelligence and social skills.

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