

Emotional intelligence among Nigerian adolescents: the role of training

Abstract

The study investigated the influence of training on emotional intelligence of adolescents in Jos South LGA of Plateau State. Forty-eight adolescents from two secondary schools (Sunnah High School and TCNN Secondary School) were used for the study. An experimental design was used in the study with 24 participants in the experimental group and 24 in the control group. The treatment group participated in six sessions of training involving intensive training in emotional-social intelligence skills acquisition for one month. The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) were used to measure emotional intelligence. The hypothesis tested showed that there was a significant effect of training on emotional intelligence of adolescents with those in the experimental group scoring higher on emotional intelligence. Because Training was found to be effective in improving the emotional intelligence of adolescents in secondary schools participating in this study. Curriculum developers were recommended to incorporate emotional intelligence training into the school curriculum in schools which will help in the development of a sane society.

Keywords: training, experiment, control, emotional intelligence

Volume 10 Issue 5 - 2019

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Received: August 13, 2019 | **Published:** October 03, 2019

Introduction

Emotional Intelligence is the ability of accurate perception, assessment and expression of emotions, and the ability to develop or acquire emotions that facilitate thinking.¹ Poor emotional intelligence exhibited by Nigerians has culminated into negative vices.^{2,3} A study by Ugoani⁴ shows that a generation has been repeatedly exposed to intense realistic violence resulting in more acceptance of aggression, less resistance to brutality, and less compassionate attitude. Adolescents who were born during the periods of the year 2000 to date have grown up seeing crises and terror acts and are therefore highly vulnerable.^{4,5} These reflections of poor emotional intelligence are also evident with the incessant religious, ethnic and political conflicts in Nigeria.³ Ethnic and faith based militant gangs led by urban adolescents have been killing people in great numbers, including the kidnap of 234 Chibok school girls in expression of anger to avenge for allegations of bad political leadership characterized by youth unemployment, political imbalance, poverty, lack of socio-cultural infrastructures, marginalization among others in the North Eastern part of Nigeria and also pipeline vandalism and kidnaping in the Southern part of the Country is becoming rampant.⁵

Initiation of intervention strategies to stop the decline of emotional-social intelligence will therefore go a long way in reducing the menace of terrorism, drug abuse, aggressive behaviors and other evil vices in Nigeria.⁶ It is interesting to know that emotional intelligence have been shown to help adolescents greatly especially in the area of maintaining effective relationships, positive adjustment and managing various degrees of emotions.⁷ It is also interesting to note that emotional intelligence is an ability that can be learned or that can be developed over the time.⁸ Thus, “the need to educate people on how to develop the ability to manage their own emotions, inner psychological resources for positive relationship and social intelligence” which will help enhance performance and satisfaction and help groups driven by hatred to live together in peace”.³

Thus, this study sought to investigate the effect of training in emotional intelligence on psychological wellbeing/of adolescents.

Statement of the problem

Research have shown how vulnerable adolescents are at the risk of some emotional and mental health issues; for example, 850,000 children and adolescents have been diagnosed with mental health problem, around 1 in every 12 young people deliberately exercise self-harm and 3 children in every classroom have a diagnosable mental health problem. Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer severe depression, 45% of children in care have a mental health disorder.⁶

Edobor & Ebiye⁹ found that lack of emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of negative behaviours among adolescents which includes bullying, truancy, aggressiveness, fighting, and drug addictions which are detrimental to their mental wellbeing. With these enormous challenges confronted by adolescents, the need for training Emotional Intelligence to have psychological well-being; has become imminent.

Many experimental studies provide evidence that training will significantly and positively influence the level of emotional intelligence but very few studies are done on adolescent population.^{7,10,11} From most of the literature-review, it was found that no research has been done using such intervention approach of training emotional intelligence to adolescents particularly, in Northern Nigeria. Thus this study may fill the gap.

Objectives of study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of emotional intelligence skills training on the emotional intelligence of adolescents. Other specific objective of this study is:

1. To examine if adolescents in experimental group who receive

training will have higher emotional intelligence more than adolescents in control group with no emotional intelligence training.

Research question

What is the difference in emotional intelligence among adolescents in Experimental group who receive training and adolescents in control group with no emotional intelligence training?

Significance of study

The significance of this study cannot be overemphasized as it will contribute immensely to different sectors of the economy such as government agencies, educational institutions and even personal development.

- a. It will help the government to curb the incessant breakdown of law and order situation which is the effect of poor emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing. This can be done through formulating policy that will make the inclusion of emotional intelligence skills training into the school curriculum on priority basis. It will also help in understanding ways of building appropriate and conducive environment for the adolescent to function optimally, academically and otherwise.
- b. It will help in developing social intelligence in the life of adolescents which is very useful in individual and social crises management. The study may also help equip the next generation of leaders of the nation in the administration of good governance.
- c. For educational institutions, it will assist teachers in handling their students and will also help the students to perform better in their academic performance.
- d. Finally, it will help in the ongoing peace building in Nigeria and the world at large.

Theoretical framework

Training is based on positive psychology paradigm¹² and is used in this study to explain how training influences Emotional intelligence. Positive emotions broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire enabling an individual to build a variety of sustainable personal resources. These personal resources include physical resources (e.g. physical skills or health), social resources (e.g. friendships and social-support networks), intellectual resources (e.g. knowledge, intellectual complexity, executive control, theory of mind) and psychological resources (e.g. resilience, optimism, creativity). According to this theory, positive emotions can broaden an individual's momentary thought-action repertoire which enables the individual to build physical resources such as physical skills or health, social resources as friendships and social-support networks, intellectual resources as knowledge, intellectual complexity, executive control, theory of mind and psychological resources as resilience, optimism and creativity. Therefore, helping the individual to work on his or her emotions will go a long way to help develop good emotional intelligence.

Broaden and Build Theory of Positive Emotions relates to the factor of emotional intelligence as it involves carefully designed activities that are aimed at broadening the thoughts and emotions of the adolescents in a positive manner. It is expected that at the end of the training, the adolescent's mindset will be positively impacted and broad enough to make the desired changes.

Empirical review of literature

Karimzadeh et al.¹³ studied the effect of social emotional skills training on general health and emotional intelligence of primary teachers; sample comprised of 76 elementary teachers (grades 4 and 5). Training of ten weeks and 10 sessions where in experimental group participated in a set of social-emotional skills (inter personal – intrapersonal skills) training program. Results showed that training had significant effect in increasing social emotional skills and its components on teacher's experimental group.

Slaski & Carwright (as cited in Schutte, et al.⁸) compared managers who received emotional intelligence training for one day per week for a period of four weeks with a control group of managers who were assigned to a control comparison condition. Their result showed that the managers in the training group scored significantly higher on typical or trait emotional intelligence and also had significantly better scores for self-rated mental health and work morale, when compared to the managers in the control group. They showed an average increase of 10.5% in work morale and an average decrease of 11.1% in work related distress.

In another study with medical students, Fletcher et al.¹⁴ found that a seven month-long training of the four basic components of emotional intelligence to a treatment group resulted in participants scoring significantly higher on typical emotional intelligence than medical students in the control group. The authors pointed out that these results should be viewed with caution as the design used a non-equivalent control group, and there was a high dropout rate in the training group.

Research hypotheses

Adolescents in Experimental group who receive training will have higher emotional intelligence than adolescents in control group with no emotional intelligence training.

Methodology

Participants

The study population was adolescents from two Secondary Schools in Jos South LGA of Plateau state. The sample of the study consists of 24 males and 24 females from the two schools with equal representation from the two schools. The adolescents who participated in the study were selected through the simple random sampling technique. After the selection, the selected adolescents were divided into two groups (experimental and control group) through the hat and draw method. The age range of the participants was between 14 and 20 years with a mean age of 16 years. 24 of the participants were Christians and 24 were Muslims.

Research design

The Design used in carrying out this study is the experimental design. The independent variable is the training received by participant and the dependent variable is emotional intelligence.

Instruments

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) were adopted to measure the emotional intelligence of adolescents in this study. The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale was developed and validated by Wong & Law¹⁵ and is based on Davies (1998) four-

dimensional definition of emotional intelligence. There are 16 items on the scales which assess emotional intelligence competences in four areas; Self-Emotional Appraisal, Others-Emotions Appraisal, Use of Emotion and Regulation of Emotion. It contains less number of items and has been validated and used among Nigerian students. It has a high reliability coefficient of 85.¹⁶ among the Nigerian students. The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale was measured on a 5-point Likert format type scale from “1” (Not so true of me) to “5” (fully represents me). Sample questions on this scale are “I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time”, “I always know whether or not I am happy” and “I have good control of my own emotions”. On the average, it takes 6 minutes to fill the questionnaire. Higher score on this questionnaire shows good emotional intelligence while lower scores indicate poor emotional intelligence. The Demographic Section includes information on the participant’s biodata such as sex, age, religious affiliation and economic class.

Procedure

The researcher in company of a research assistant and one resource person visited the two secondary schools; the team introduced themselves to the school authorities and intimated the schools on their purpose of visit. They sought the consent of the school authorities to use their students for the research. The students’ gave informed consent to participate in the study. The adolescents were then randomly assigned into the treatment and control groups through the hat and draw method. While the treatment group was taken to the school hall where they received the training on different aspects of emotional intelligence, the control group received placebo training on entrepreneurship. The participants were assured of confidentiality of all information they provided and also, were given the opportunity to withdraw at any time they felt not interested to continue.

The training was divided into 8 sessions twice in a week spanning 2 hours for 1 month. While the treatment group received the training on emotional-social skills development, the control group only received placebo training on entrepreneurship. The adolescents in the treatment group were provided with a background on the importance of emotional intelligence and an overview of EI skills, to help them handle difficult interpersonal situations more effectively. The emotional intelligence skills taught consisted of: Interpersonal (self-awareness, feeling management, stress management, self-concept, and self-confidence), Intrapersonal (verbal-nonverbal relationship, listening, empathy, assertiveness, decision making, problem solving, and conflict solution). In general, the five basic subscales of emotional intelligence by Goleman¹⁷ which consists of self-awareness, self-management, empathy, social skills and motivation were discussed with focused group discussion and group activities as part of the programme.

At the end of the training, to test the effectiveness of the interventions, a post test was administered through the use of self-reported questionnaire (Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale). Both the treatment group and control groups were administered the same questionnaires which took them about 15 minutes to fill. The effectiveness of emotional intelligence skills among the adolescents was then assessed by comparing the results of the treatment group with that of the control group.

Method of statistical analyses

The T-test was utilized in comparing the treatment and control group on the dependent variables.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the demographic variables. There were more males than females. Majority of the participants were 16 years followed by 15, 18 and 19 and finally 20 and above years which had 4 participants. There was an equal distribution of participants on religious affiliation, 24 Christians and 24 Muslim. Finally, there was an equal representation of 24 participants for Sunnah high School and Theological College of Northern Nigeria Secondary School.

Table 1 Frequency distribution for demographic variables

Demographic Factors	Frequency	Percent %
Gender		
Male	37	77.08
Female	11	22.02
Total	48	100.0
Age		
14 Years	2	4.17
15 Years	8	16.67
16 Years	18	37.50
18 Years	8	16.67
19 Years	8	16.67
20 Years	4	8.33
Total	48	100.0
Religion		
Islam	24	50.0
Christianity	24	50.0
Total	48	100.0
School		
Sunnah Private School	24	50.0
TCNN Private School	24	50.0
Total	48	100.0

Inferential statistics

Hypothesis

By comparing the treatment group and control group, the result from Table 2 shows that there was a significant effect of training on emotional intelligence, Means Treatment (53.13 {SD 36.91}), Control (42 {32.49}), ($p=0.0001$). The treatment group scored higher than the control group on emotional intelligence. The alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Table 2 Data Summary and t-test for effect of training on emotional-social intelligence

Group (s)	Mean	SD	t	Df	P
Treatment	53.13	36.91	5.28	46	<.0001
Control	42.08	32.49			

Discussion of findings

This study was aimed at investigating the effect of training on emotional intelligence of adolescents in two secondary schools in Jos South LGA of Plateau State. The hypothesis tested showed that there was a significant effect of training on emotional intelligence of adolescents. The result is supported by the findings of different researchers.^{8,13,14,18} Their findings indicate the beneficial effects of training on emotional skills acquisition using a number of school-based programs that focus on emotional intelligence learning. The relevance and dynamism of emotional intelligence to human endeavors cannot be overemphasized and applying the basic principles of emotional intelligence in line with Salovey & Mayer¹⁹ assertion were observed in this study. They¹⁷ were of the opinion that emotional intelligence can be categorized into five domains: Self-awareness (i.e., observing oneself and recognizing one's feeling as it happens); managing emotions (i.e., handling feelings in a more appropriate way); motivating oneself (i.e., channeling one's emotions in the direction of a goal); empathy (i.e., being sensitive to others' feelings and concerns); and handling relationships (i.e., managing others' emotions). Goleman¹⁷ also lent a support to this by asserting that emotional intelligence involves the skills that help people harmonize; and what has become increasingly valued asset in variety of settings in the years to come. This again underscores the importance of emotional intelligence.

Mayer and Salovey¹⁹ sees emotional intelligence as a kind of intelligence that involves emotions and excitement and consists of four components of emotional perception, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions and managing emotions associated with self and others and the second view, while Bar-On,²⁰ sees it as non-cognitive abilities which includes components of interpersonal skills (self-awareness, courage, self-esteem, self-actualization, independence), interpersonal skills (interpersonal relationships, social commitment, empathy), adjustment (reality testing, problem solving, flexibility), stress management (ability to withstand stress, impulse control), general mood (happiness and optimism). Others are emotion management infrastructure components (control mood and stress tolerance and the general mood (vitality and expression even when there are negative feelings).

The implication of this finding is that training was effective in increasing the emotional intelligence of adolescents especially in the area of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills or relationship management and the ability to be motivated in events that seems distressing. The different training strategies which actively engaged the adolescents to learn and apply emotional intelligence to their everyday living impacted the participants and distinguished them from those that did not receive the training.

Limitations of study

The participants were not always readily available due to school activities. This led to the late coming of some and non-attendance of some during some sessions. This may hamper the result as it was expected of all of them to be available and on time during all sessions. Also, the small sample size of 48 might have limited the findings of the study. While age of adolescence, comprehension level and possible errors or biases in answering questions of Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale might also influence the result.

Conclusion

Results from the study are an indication of the effectiveness of

training in increasing emotional-social intelligence of adolescents. Because training was found to be effective in improving the emotional intelligence of secondary school students, curriculum developers should incorporate emotional intelligence based components into the school curriculum and make it a priority as part of the character development technique. Furthermore, since emotional intelligence can be taught or learned, it is important that schools and other relevant agencies apply continuous education programmes that will help in developing the emotional intelligence of adolescents ([Appendix 1](#) & [Appendix 2](#)).

Funding details

None.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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