



Emotional Intelligence: A Determinant Factor For Successful Postgraduate Programme

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence as perceived in this study has important place in the academic success of postgraduate students. Students who are highly developed in self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, empathy and self-motivation which are constructs of emotional intelligence actively engage with academic programme activities and maintain healthy and mental wellbeing. Notwithstanding the importance of emotional intelligence in postgraduate study and its relationship, postgraduate teachers' professional attitude needs to be examined. This study x-rays expert opinions on emotional intelligence as a determining factor for postgraduate students' academic achievement. It emphasises on: the need for postgraduate students to acquire emotional intelligence skills, and knowledge of emotional intelligence challenges encountered in postgraduate study, and emotional intelligence constructs that postgraduate students need to develop for successful graduation. It concludes that postgraduate students should understand that success in the programme does not depend only on their intelligence quotient level, but also on their emotional intelligence development and application. Lastly, the study recommends inclusion of emotional intelligence in our educational programme, noting that summative evaluation takes account of students' cognitive and non-cognitive achievement.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Postgraduate, Self-awareness, Self-management, Social-awareness, Empathy, and Self-motivation

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence deals essentially with that aspect of human instinct that motivates one to display positive energy(s) when faced with societal, life or educational challenges. It produces in a person the intrapersonal and also interpersonal ability to design positive outlook that can enable the individual gain foremost performance (Jaegar & Eagen, 2007). Educational programmes: primary, post-primary and tertiary (first degree, master's degree and PhD) have cognitive and non-cognitive challenges that require students to possess a very high degree of emotional intelligence. This is so because, students are evaluated in character and learning before they are deemed fit for graduation. Thus, postgraduate programme could be seen as having higher challenge capacity since it requires a very high level or degree of emotional intelligence to overcome the challenges. However, students at this stage of educational programme are seen as self-directed learners in that they have already gained mastery of the subject or course of study before enrolling for the degree. More so, the programme involves one full year of research work when the student decides his fate with his or her supervisor. The journey is usually very complex, because some supervisors like to give their students the impression that PhD research work is different from the research work undertaken at undergraduate and master's degree programme, by making the process more rigorous than necessary. This often leads students to depression and unhappiness. Thus, the need to cope with challenges at this stage makes it necessary for the student to develop a very high degree of emotional

intelligence. Otherwise the student might end up not completing the programme, or stay longer than necessary.

Though, intelligent quotient is believed by many to be the determinant factor of students' academic achievement, but some studies have shown that emotional intelligence matters more than intelligence quotient. If intelligence quotient alone accounts for students' academic performance, the student who have very high intelligence quotient will have no reason to drop out of school giving good economic background etc while a student who has very low intelligence quotient will on the other hand, have no reason to graduate from school. However, this is usually not the case as students in both cadres have been seen drop out of educational programme citing academic inefficiency. Some students who have very high intelligence quotient find it difficult to cope with the non-cognitive aspect of the educational programme. Sometimes students at this level of intelligence tend to be disloyal to their lecturers through obstinate conducts desiring to impress on the lecturer that they know it better. These students often time do not bother to attend classes or lectures, submit assignment within the stipulated time, and during research work, they might like to carry out the study ignoring the assistance, guidance or counselling of the supervisor and other staff. They do not have place for emotional intelligence constructs like self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, empathy, and self-motivation. Though, some thesis supervisors tend to derive joy presenting different kinds of emotional challenges to their supervisees either to strengthen or weaken them. PhD programme requires emotional intelligence on the parts of students and lecturers to be able to scale through as the summative process is not only based on the cognitive ability of the student, but the non-cognitive domain as well.

Academic achievement in PhD programme requires more of emotional intelligence than intelligence quotient. This is because learners are driven by different stimuli for attainment of educational success. Thus, they establish different kinds of rapport to attain the desired educational goals. Some students lack the needed emotional intelligence and consequently may not be able to create the needed rapport between them and the lecturer/supervisor. While some though, are very meticulous in their academic work, but still find it difficult to attain their educational goal. They attribute their failure to lecturer or supervisor factor. Though there may be other factors like students' economic background, marital status, and nature of student work that can affect the student performance. Infact, recent researches have unravelled that emotional intelligence is a major factor affecting academic achievement for postgraduate students.

WHY WE NEED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO SUCCEED IN POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME

Emotional intelligence often measured as "emotional intelligence quotient" describes an ability, capacity, or skill to perceive, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others and of groups'. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence "as the subset of social intelligence that comprehends the ability to surveying one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to segregate among them and to utilize this data to pilot ones thinking and actions. Bar-on (1997) described emotional intelligence "as an assortment of non-cognitive aptitude, adeptness, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressure". Emotional intelligence in this regard, is the totality of each student assortment of cognitive and non-cognitive aptitude, adeptness, and skills that enhance students' ability to succeed in managing school environmental challenges and pressures. The challenges that postgraduate students face in the educational system are not only cognitive but include non-cognitive challenges like lecturers' non-professional attitude. This sometimes may cause the student to abandon the programme, change institution, or stay longer than expected if he or she does not possess the required emotional intelligence skills to handle the situation. Students with higher emotional intelligence skills may be better able to manage negative emotions, like anxiety, boredom and disappointment, which negatively influence academic achievements. These learners may be pretty good to manage the social world around them, create better relationship with lecturers, students, and other staff that are imperative to their academic goal (Kumar, 2020).

Buttressing on the need for emotional intelligence, Gardner, in his famous book, *Frames of Mind*, 1983 as cited in (Goleman, 2006), refuted the intelligence quotient view by stating that: there was not just one, monolithic type of intelligence that was critical to success, but rather, a wide spectrum of intelligence with seven essential varieties. His list includes the two standard kinds, that is, verbal and mathematical-logical alacrity. However, the proposal goes on to include the spatial capacity, for instance, as an artist or architect; the kinaesthetic genius displayed in physical fluidity and of a Martha Graham or Magic Johnson; and the musical gifts of a Mozart or YoYoMa. Bringing the list to conclusion are two faces of what Gardner calls “the personal intelligence”. That includes interpersonal skills like, those of a great therapist such as Carl Rogers or a World class leader like Martin Luther King Jr., and the intrapsychic capacity that could appear on the one hand, in the brilliant perceptions of Sigmund Freud, or with less display, in the inner contentment that stands up from attuning one’s life to be in keeping with one’s real feeling.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME

Emotional challenges that postgraduate students go through are multi-component in nature. They include: supervisors lack of interest in the research topic submitted by the student which sometimes delays topic approval longer than necessary, not finding time to painstakingly read the students’ work, undermining the students’ progress, development and abilities rather than offering suggestions, drawing student to too many unnecessary empirical review, discouraging students by telling them they have not done enough to prove master or PhD work, and constantly changing students research objectives or topic, bullying, academic hazing, exploitation, academic selfishness, spread of malicious rumours, falsification of information, racism, mockery, and sexual harassment. All these are justified under the umbrella of academic freedom. Though, university authorities may be informed but nothing is usually done about it. Hence, the students need emotional factors like self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, empathy and self-motivation, to achieve the Master Degree or Doctor of Philosophy Degree (Muiga, 2020).

Emotional intelligence of students is the ability of the student to apply his knowledge of self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, social awareness, and empathy in written and oral communication form from the formative stage of the programme to the summative stage. This is necessary because emotional intelligence is the determinant of the students’ academic achievement owing to its emotional, educational, psychological, social and motivational undertone. Students’ emotional intelligence cannot be totally judged by using one or two types of emotions but rather a number of them. As long as students’ academic achievement depends on a number of emotional intelligence components, performance could be increased through recognising and utilizing any of such emotional intelligence (Kpolovie, Joe & Okoto, 2014). Emotional intelligence determining students’ academic achievement denotes a positive or negative predisposition towards educational activities in the school setting, which could be cognitive or non-cognitive behaviours (Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart & Roy, 2006). According to Steve (2007), emotional intelligence is the innate potential to feel, utilize, communicate, recognize, remember, describe, identify, learn from, manage, understand and explain emotions. It is a typical social aptitude that involves the student ability to monitor his or her own emotions and others feelings and susceptibility to discriminate among them and to utilize the information to aid his or her own thinking and doings. Learning and emotions occur in our brain, it implies receiving skills and knowledge that requires thinking. The way students think impact how they feel; how they feel influences how they think. The relationship between emotion and students’ academic achievement is bi-directional and complex. Sensations are the relay stations between sensory inputs and thinking. Thus, reproducing the input positively will motivate students to act and achieve objectively (Kumar, 2020). Learning generally has emotional undertone, hence, emotional intelligence is not opposed to intelligence quotient. It is not the

triumph of head over heart, rather, it is a unique intersection of both, since it helps students to solve problems and live a more productive life.

Several studies have been conducted in-order to find out the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' academic achievement. For instance, Nnaji, Eze and Madu (2020) carried out a study on 483 students' emotional intelligence and its relationship with students' achievements in Mathematics. The result of the study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the components of emotional intelligence and students' academic achievement. Muiga (2020) in a study involving 390 students on the extent to which emotional intelligence and academic self-efficacy beliefs predict academic achievement of secondary school students found that emotional intelligence and academic achievement have significant positive relationship. The study further showed a significant positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and students' academic achievement. Jaegar, Bresciani and Ward (2003) conducted a study on predicting persistence and academic performance of first year students: an assessment of emotional intelligence and non-cognitive variables. The study indicates that levels of emotional intelligence among 150 students of a general management graduate level course were associated with academic performance. It further shows positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among students who offered emotional intelligence curriculum as compared to those who did not undergo the curriculum. Yahaya, Bachok, Sar, Talib and Ismail (2011) in a study on the impact of emotional intelligence elements on students' academic achievement reported positive relationship between self-awareness, emotional management and empathy. A study on emotional intelligence as predictor of academic achievement among college students by Shipley, Jackson and Segrest (2007) found that emotional intelligence does not significantly predict students' academic achievement. Babelan and Moenikia (2010) listed the emotional intelligence domains that predict academic achievement to include interpersonal relationship, social awareness, self-motivation, self-expression and self-awareness. Maraichelvi and Ragan (2013) observed that emotional awareness was a significant predictor of academic achievement. The researchers further noted that students who scored high in emotional awareness test also scored high in academic achievement test. A study involving 375 students on the prediction of academic achievement from emotional intelligence among high school students by Amalu (2018) found that emotional management, self-awareness, self-motivation, social-awareness and empathy significantly predict students' achievement in Mathematics. Aminuddin, Tajulanipin and Rohaizan (2009) in a study on examining emotional intelligence level among 223, form one and form four students in rural areas, found that emotional intelligence is closely related to students' academic achievement. In like manner, Jaeger and Eagan (2007) in a study involving 3500 first year students discovered that interpersonal, stress management and adaptability are significant predictors of students' academic achievement. The researchers further pointed out that the ability to deal with stressful situations allows students to manage anxiety of thesis writing, competing priority, and personal challenges. They pointed that to achieve success in higher learning graduates need to have emotional abilities to enable them to be calm, flexible and real when dealing with pressure.

Adaptability among graduate students identifies individuals who are generally flexible, realistic, effective in understanding emotionally challenging situations and competent in adequately handling or managing such situation. Bar-On (2005) in recognizing the influence of non-cognitive domain or ability in the success of graduate students, stated that ability to manage ones emotions, to be able to validate ones feelings and to solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature are important to be academically successful. The evaluator contends that an assessment of emotional intelligence levels of students can be used to predict their academic performance, identify students who need guidance intervention, and equally enhance their emotional-social intelligence competencies and skills thereby helping them to achieve better academically. Similarly, Chew, Zain and Hassan (2013) contend that regardless of the level of education, emotional intelligence remains the main drive or determinant of students' academic achievement. Salovey and Mayer (1997) stated that having the ability to regulate emotions allows people

to accept and handle pleasant and unpleasant feelings. This is important as it helps students to cope with blissful and disturbing experiences as well as the pressure to achieve academically.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE CONSTRUCTS THAT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS NEED FOR SUCCESSFUL GRADUATION

Studies have shown that emotional intelligence is as important as cognitive intelligence or intelligence quotient. This is because emotionally intelligent students are better developed to deal with the good, the bad, and the ugly emotions that might disrupt their academic goals. The constructs of emotional intelligence according to Goleman (2005) are:

Self-awareness: The ability to recognize and monitor your own emotions or feelings from moment to moment is crucial to psychological insight and self-understanding. Beyond recognizing emotions is being aware of one's actions, feelings, moods and those of others. Self-awareness implies being aware of our feeling and thoughts about that feeling, which can be a nonreactive, non-judgemental attention to our inner state. People with greater certainty about their feelings are better pilots of their lives, having surer sense of how they really feel about personal decisions. Self-awareness licence one to perceive things from the perspective of other people, maintain self-control, work collaboratively, be creative and notice ones ego. It helps the individual evaluate himself routinely. Self-awareness encourages positive self-development, since it makes for more proactive, increase self-confidence and acceptance. It makes students better in their study, improves communication with teachers, students and other staff, thereby creating confidence and study related wellbeing (Al-Sahafi, 2016). A student being self-aware implies that he or she must be capable of monitoring his emotional reactions while correctly identifying every particular emotion. Self-aware students also recognize the relationship between the things they feel and how they behave. These students also have the ability to recognize that their strengths and limitations and learn from their interactions with others. Goleman (2005) pointed out that students who possess self-awareness have a good sense of humour and are confident in themselves and their abilities and are aware of how they are rated by other people. Self-awareness does not imply being carried away by emotions, overreacting and amplifying what is perceived. Instead, it is a neutral state that maintains self-reflectiveness even amidst turbulent emotions.

Self-awareness has the potential to virtually improve every learning experience required of the student, hence, it is an instrument and practice that can be utilized anywhere anytime. Putting self-awareness to work permits students to better react to situation(s) or people who might set them off. When one is aware of his emotions and possesses the techniques of managing them, he becomes better equipped to work through or navigate unnecessary obstacle. Some important self-awareness skills include: empathy, confidence, adaptability, mindfulness, patience and kindness. Being self-aware makes students who may be having a bad day to realise in seconds their goals. Thus, when a student understands himself, it becomes easier to build positive self-esteem, look beyond the negative aspect of his challenges to focus on the good side of it.

Self-management: beyond being aware of your own emotions and the impact it has on others, emotional intelligence demands that you have the capacity to manage your emotions, thoughts and behaviour in different challenging times and not lockdown or lose hold of your true feelings. This requires waiting for the right situation to air your feelings. It also involves flexibility and adaptation to changes. Students who are highly developed in self-management skills are usually very good in managing conflict and dissipating chilling situations. They are known for being thoughtful about how they influence others, have very high consciousness, and take responsibility for whatever they do. Developing self-management skills helps students to handle different areas of their life, which, when applied to the social world around makes them better educated individuals. It makes them know what to do and how to behave in different situations. Self-management helps students to study independently, complete their task and take active role in monitoring and reinforcing their behaviour. It also helps students to improve in their academic achievements, gain creativity skills, manage behaviours that are problematic and reduce time on task. For

instance, school administrators set rules which many students don't feel strong attachment to; but when the students are involved in creating behaviour norms, they most likely abide to the rules.

Self-management makes students become great achievers since it deals with techniques and approaches utilized in directing one's actions, goal setting, planning and effective management one's time effectively. Self-management skills are the characteristics that help a student to be more creative in his study. It assists students communicate and interact effectively and efficiently with other students, teachers, supervisors and other members of staff. Students who have developed self-management skills are reinforced intrinsically (self-directed) rather than extrinsically (teacher directed). Self-management involves some essential component like: self-monitoring, self-instruction, self-assessment and self-reinforcement (Fitzpatrick & Knowlton, 2009).

Social-awareness: the ability to interact well with others is another important aspect of emotional intelligence. Social-awareness according to Goleman (2006) refers to a spectrum that runs from instantaneously sensing another's inner state, to understanding her feelings and thoughts, to getting complex social situations. It aids students to build good relationship with other students and teachers and to design a strong rapport with them. True emotional understanding goes beyond understanding one's own emotion and those of others in an academic environment. In the formal, information is put to work daily in the students' interactions and communications. It involves active listening, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, leadership and forcefulness. Social-awareness can manifest in a student's ability to find solution to social dilemmas, such as, how to settle problems between a student and a lecturer, or how to make friends with students, and lecturers also. The best social solutions come most readily to students who can gather relevant information and think through solutions more clearly. Goleman (2006) contends that the inability to find solution to existing concerns or problems not only confounds relationship, but is a complicating factor in psychological difficulties that range from depression to schizophrenia. Generally, it is viewed that students who have better social-awareness skills usually have successful educational career, as well as personal life. A social-awareness skill improve students' positive attitudes and reduces negative attitudes while effectively preventing a variety of problems like alcohol and drug use, violence, truancy, and bullying. Developing and applying social-awareness skills promotes students' academic achievement, collaborative work, health and total wellbeing (Fitzpatrick & Knowlton, 2009).

Empathy: the ability to understand how others are feeling is obviously critical to emotional intelligence. Empathy looks beyond being able to recognize the emotional state of others. It involves how the student responds to others using the information obtained. Being empathetic also allows students to understand the dynamic power that can influence social relationships, especially in the academic environment where diplomat is the end point. People who are empathic are more accustomed to the indirect social signals that indicate what others need (Goleman, 2005). The competence to comprehend the feelings of another person shows up in broad areas of life from marketing and management, academic, relationship, parenting, compassion and politics. Some persons rarely put or express their feelings into words; rather they more often express their emotions through other inkling. Fundamental to intuiting another's emotions is in the capacity to read non-verbal channels, tone of voice, facial expression and body movement. The evolution of empathy aids students and teachers milk into the bring up instinct, caring for and playing along with other students and staff, while learning to put up trust for each other. Empathy formations usually require the individual to involve in putting himself in the position of the other person. It calls for understanding the thoughts and feelings of other people correctly. It is about feeling what the other person feels exactly, acting or playing the script or the role of another individual and making it worth what the individual feels. Individuals possess different levels of empathy, like consciousness which often causes changes in human behaviour. It is worthy to note that due to different empathic levels, people exhibit different behaviour pattern in different forms (Topcu, Baker & Aydin, 2010). Empathy is very necessary in postgraduate study, as thesis supervisors or teachers who are skilled in it usually employ it to keep away from or steer clear of struggle with students who are irritated, calm angry or agitated students while fashioning effective communication.

Self-motivation: emotionally intelligent students are motivated by things beyond extrinsic reward like fame, money, acclaim and recognition, but by their passion to fulfil their own inner needs and goals. They pursue internal rewards, experience flow by being totally involved with activity and seek peak experiences. Emotionally motivated students tend to be action-oriented and goal setters, and are interested in achieving high. Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995) noted that motivation sustains human behaviour in a particular committed direction. It is a psychological characteristic that contributes to a person's degree of attachment or devotedness. It equally determines if students are able to make extra effort needed to be successful, to overcome when confronted with difficulty in learning activities. Considering the role of motivation, the marshalling of feelings like enthusiasm and confidence to enhance achievement, Goleman (2005) pointed out that Olympic athletes, world-class musicians and chess grand masters find that their unifying trait or affection is the ability to motivate them to pursue relentless training routine. Motivation makes students to do a particular thing and strive to succeed in doing that thing despite challenges. Students who are intrinsically motivated go about their studies with persistence and always look for positive ways of interpreting their challenges. Such students take very great delight in their success and continue to be allured to them. They do not surrender or give up on anything easily due to failure to succeed (Davids, 2003). Self-motivation requires students to believe in their emotional intelligence skills to remain persuaded and continue to forge on, any challenges notwithstanding.

CONCLUSION

The worth of emotional intelligence in achieving success in every area of human activity cannot be stated enough. Postgraduate students who have developed self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, empathy, and self-motivation do remind themselves on their educational goals; hence they feel knowledgeable enough to design positive ways of navigating emotional challenges that the programme might pose. Realizing that emotional intelligence and students' success in academics could be compromised by lack or inadequate knowledge of emotional intelligence and its application, students should deem it fit to acquire emotional intelligence skills. Hence literatures have shown that success in postgraduate programme is determined by students' level or degree of emotional intelligence development and application. Thus, postgraduate students with very high level of emotional intelligence tend to graduate within the stipulated programme duration.

RECOMMENDATION

Considering the relevance of emotional intelligence in equipping students with self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, empathy, and self-motivational knowledge, to enable them to navigate emotional challenges (cognitive and non-cognitive) which postgraduate students are faced with in their pursuit for educational success, it is important that educational agencies or ministries should consider to give emotional intelligence a place in our curriculum since both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of the students are appropriately taken into account during summative assessment.

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