

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERSONALITY TRAITS AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF GIFTED SECONDARY STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The study examined emotional intelligence and personality traits as correlates of academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and one corresponding hypothesis postulated for the study. Correlational survey research design was employed in the study. The population for the study comprised all gifted secondary school students in the gifted schools in Nigeria. The target population was all 326 Gifted Senior Secondary School III students in the two gifted schools in Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all 116 students in the first school and 210 students in the second school. Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) and Personality Traits Scale (PTS) used to measure the respondents' EI and PT were adapted. The gifted students' AP was measured with English language test adopted from WASSCE 2017/2018. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha. The instruments yielded reliability coefficient values of 0.76 and 0.83 for EI, and PT. The data collected were analysed using percentage and multinomial logistic regression. The findings of the study were that: majority of the sampled gifted students had high level of EI; Predominant PT of gifted students was openness to experience; majority of the sampled gifted students had high level of AP; and there was a significant positive relationship among EI, PT and AP of gifted students in Nigeria. It was therefore recommended among others that emotional intelligence and personality traits seminars should be organised to sensitize gifted secondary students, teachers and educational policy makers on the need to understand the importance of emotional intelligence and personality traits to academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Personality Traits, Academic Performance Gifted Students,

### Introduction

People exhibit differences in diverse of ways which has led researchers to conduct researches into the different elements that causes individual differences in business, leadership and academic performance, just to mention a few. These disparities sweep across all aspects of human life and endeavour, including academic performance. In academic contexts, there are students who perform below average, those who perform above average, and those who perform exceptionally well in one or more domains and are referred to as gifted students.

Gifted students are those individuals who exhibit exceptionality in one or more domains. These students are seen as above average or students who have high Intelligence Quotients (IQ) and perform excellently in their academics. In support of this assertion, National Association for Gifted Students (2010) defined gifted individuals as those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance in top 10%) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and /or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, and

sports).

According to Altinta and Llgun (2015), gifted students are seen as individuals who are effective and efficient intellectually and mentally. They use their energy to reach their goals. The ability to learn quickly is one of the most important characteristics of exceptional individuals. They further submitted that, gifted students in comparison to their peers: learn to speak, read, and write at a young age, and this learning continues until secondary school. With their acquisitive capacity, they want to learn new things on a regular basis.

The development of ability is a lifelong process. It can be evident in students as exceptional performance on tests and/or other measures of ability or as a rapid rate of learning, compared to other students of the same age, or in actual achievement in a domain. A student is seen as gifted when his or her level of intelligence and conception is beyond his/her age or possibly demand what students of his/her age range will not bother to ask. As individuals developed through childhood to adolescence, however, performance and high levels of motivation in one domain or different domains become the primary characteristics of their giftedness. It therefore shows that gifted students exhibit exceptionality or outstanding performance in their domains compared to their non-gifted counterparts when it comes to academic performance.

Major stakeholders who include students, tutors, parents, and educational psychologists are all concerned about academic success of students. It is critical for educational psychologists and other educational stakeholders to identify the elements that contribute to learner high and low academic performance. Academic performance, according to Sharma, Manga, and Nagar (2016), is the consequence of education, or the degree to which a student, instructor, or institution has met their educational objectives. As a result, academic performance is frequently judged by tests or continuous assessment outcomes, as well as what a student can do in and outside of school with the knowledge he or she has absorbed. Students' academic performance is determined by results from on-going assessments, teacher-made examinations, terminal examinations, and external examinations such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO). Individual disparities in academic skill or mastery of a specific assignment are frequently reflected in their academic performance.

Academic performance of gifted students is expected to be high. However, it can be high, average, or low due to a variety of circumstances. Emotional intelligence and personality traits may be the underlying factors in this study. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, the idea of emotional intelligence and personality traits appear to have been rarely examined combined in the literature as constructs that might have a positive or negative association with students' academic performance. It can, therefore, be rightly said that adequate attention has not been given to these captivating variables together, which to this researcher's mind, may be relevant in determining the academic performance of gifted secondary school students in Nigeria. These phenomenon are not limited to a specific level or group of people; they apply to all humans, young and old, boys and girls, gifted and non-gifted learners alike. It is very important to state that every human being exhibited one personality traits or the other and emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence may be defined as gifted students ability to recognize one's emotions, comprehend what they are, and grasp how those emotions affect them. It entails learning how students perceive themselves in order to better manage relationships. Emotional intelligence, according to Goleman (2006), is far more essential than intelligence quotient, because emotional intelligence enhances a person's behaviour far more than cognitive quotient. To him, intelligence

quotient accounted for only 20% of the total success, and the rest goes for emotional and social intelligences.

Furthermore, Goleman, Boyatzis and Mckee (2002), established that emotional intelligence is a multidimensional construct with self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy and social skill domain. Self-awareness as to do with being sentient to emotions, which is the ability to perceive and discern feelings as they are. Self-regulation, as to do with how feelings or emotions are been used in a profiting way without hurting yourself and others. These components will be helpful to gifted students to detect their emotions such as excitement, anger, joy and sadness and manage it well. Self-motivation as to do with the skill to direct and guide emotions and feelings toward goals. This particular component will enable the students to be able to realize their area of weakness and strength and will be able to direct the energy in achieving their academic goals. Empathy as a component is all about the aptitude to understands or being aware of others feelings in order to tolerate their views, value the disparity between others and him. While the last component which is social skill talks about the ability to manage others emotion and to effectively communicate with them.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study examined emotional intelligence and personality traits as correlates of academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria. Gifted student are believed to be exceptional students compared to their non-gifted counterparts. Many people held views that gifted students' performances were excellent as a result of their cognitive and intellectual abilities, without considering other constructs such as emotional intelligence and personality traits that could be responsible and play significant roles in improving and sustaining students' academic performance. However, the fact that they are gifted students prompted the researchers to find out why their performance was fluctuating. From the results made available to the researchers it revealed that in 2013 and 2014 the percentage of the gifted students who had 5 credits and above including English language and Mathematics subjects was 85% and 87% respectively, which showed that even gifted students also failed in one of English language and Mathematics in WASSCE. It can also be deduced that the remaining 15% and 13% of the candidates who sat for the examination have no opportunity to process admission and proceed into higher institutions because of the deficiencies in either English language or Mathematics. Their performance dropped further in 2015, which showed that about 32% of gifted students in 2015 did not have credit in English language or Mathematics. Though there was improvement in 2016, 2017 and 2018 compared to 2015, but still not the best of results one would expect from gifted students because the remaining 19%, 10 % and 18% from these three years must re-registered if they are to further their education at all and they must be catered for.

Several researches have been carried out on emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance among non-gifted students, teachers and professional workers but to the best of the researcher's knowledge, little or none has been carried out among gifted students in Nigeria. Hence, the researcher's focus is to fill this gap by investigating the extent of correlation among emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance of gifted secondary school students in Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study investigated the relationship among emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance of gifted secondary school students in Nigeria. Specifically, the study:

1. determined the level of emotional intelligence of gifted students in Nigeria;

2. identified the predominant personality traits of gifted students in Nigeria;
3. determined the level of academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria;
4. investigated the relationship among emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria;

### **Research Questions**

Based on the purposes of the study, the following research questions were raised in the study;

1. What is the level of emotional intelligence of gifted students in Nigeria?
2. What is the predominant personality trait of gifted students in Nigeria?
3. What is the level of academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria?
4. What is the relationship among emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

A null hypothesis was formulated in the study as follow:

HO1: There is no significant relationship among emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employed correlational survey research design. According to Waters (2017), correlational survey design is a research approach in which logically related sets of numerical variables are examined to determine if relationship exists between or among the set of variables. This design is considered appropriate because it allows the use of correlations among variables in assessing the theoretical propositions about the variables. The population for this study was all gifted Secondary School Students in the two gifted schools in Nigeria. The target population was all Gifted Senior Secondary School III students of the two gifted schools. The researchers decided to involve these two schools because they are the only two known government approved and financed Gifted Secondary Schools in Nigeria.

The researchers purposively selected 326 SSS III students of the two gifted schools. All 116 SSS III students in the first school and 210 SSS III gifted students in the second school were the ones who served as respondents. However, 312 respondents completed the questionnaire used for the analysis. The instrument has two sub-scales namely: Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) adapted from Sa'ad (2015) originally designed by Wong and Law (2002). Personality Traits Scale (PTS) developed by John and Srivastava (1999) was adapted to measure gifted students' personality traits. While Students' academic performance was measured with an English language test adopted from WASSCE 2017/2018. The instruments have rating scale of 5 points Likert scale of (1=Disagree Strongly, 2=Disagree A Little, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Agree Little, 5=Agree Strongly).

Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentage and inferential statistics of multinomial logistic regression with the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) method. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significant

### **Results**

#### **Hypotheses Testing**

This section presents the summary of the findings from the hypotheses tested in the study.

HO1 There is no significant relationship among Emotional Intelligence, Personality Traits and Academic Performance of gifted students in Nigeria.

In order to test the hypothesis, responses on emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance test of sampled gifted students in Nigeria were analysed using Multinomial Logistic Regression. The result is reported in Table 1.

**Table 1: Model Fitting Information on the Relationship among Emotional Intelligence, Personality Traits and Academic Performance of Gifted Students in Nigeria**

Model	Model Fitting Criteria		Likelihood Ratio Tests	
	-2 Log Likelihood	Nagelkerke R2	Chi-Square	p-value
Intercept Only	69.35			
Final	36.82	0.12	32.54	0.00

Results in Table 1 show the indices for considering whether the variables added to the model (emotional intelligence and personality traits) statistically significantly predict the academic performance (statistically significantly correlate with the dependent variable). As shown on the table, there was a significant relationship among emotional intelligence, personality traits and academic performance of sampled gifted students in Nigeria. This was evident from the calculated r-value of 0.36 and p-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since 0.00 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The Nagelkerke's R-square value of 0.12 means that the variables of emotional intelligence and personality traits accounted for 12% of changes observed in academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria. The relative contribution of each of the independent variables, produced in the form of chi-square, is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Relative Contribution of Emotional Intelligence and Personality Traits to Academic Performance of Gifted Students in Nigeria**

Effect	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
		Chi-Square	Df	p-value
Intercept	36.815	0.000	0	.
Emotional Intelligence	43.812	6.997	2	0.04
Personality Traits	63.998	27.183	8	0.00

Result in Table 2 show the relative contribution of emotional intelligence and personality traits to academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria. As contained in the Table, emotional intelligence contributed chi-square value of 6.997 with p-value of 0.04 which was significant at 0.05 level of significance. Also, personality trait contributed chi-square value of 27.183 with p-value of 0.00 and was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that emotional intelligence and personality traits contributed significantly to academic performance of the sampled gifted students in Nigeria. However, personality traits contributed better than emotional intelligence.

### Discussion

The finding of the study showed that the emotional intelligence of gifted students was high in Nigeria with (57.31% ). This is due to the fact that the majority of the gifted students in the study had high emotional intelligence. This could be attributed to gifted students' greater reasoning abilities and shown capacity to manage thoughts. This research supports Khasawneh and Aldiabat's (2017) prior conclusion that gifted students had high level of emotional intelligence. This study's findings, on the other hand are in conflict with that of Adepoju (2011) who found that students with accomplished

academic performance had low level of emotional intelligence.

The second finding of the study showed that openness to experience was the main personality feature of gifted students across Nigeria. The reason for this is that the majority of the students sampled were highly gifted on the scale of openness to experience. Plausible explanation for this might be that gifted students are always open to new ideas and experiences from their surroundings, and they enjoy both inner and outer worlds as a result of their inquisitive nature. This could be responsible for why Openness to Experience was the dominant personality trait among gifted students in Nigeria. This result supported the earlier finding of Barrick, Mount and Judge (2001) that high proportions of gifted students were of openness personality trait. This conclusion, however, contradicted the findings of Eyong, David, and Umoh (2014), who found that Conscientiousness and Agreeableness were the most common personality traits among students.

The study's third finding revealed that gifted students in Nigeria have a high degree of academic performance. This is due to the fact that the vast majority of the gifted students in the sample scored above average on the English Language Test. This outcome is possible when students have high levels of Emotional Intelligence and Intelligence Quotient (IQ), willingness to learn, as well as availability and utilisation of learning related resources and facilities come into play. Credible reasons for gifted students' high academic performance in English Language tests include the fact that gifted students are more capable and learn faster than their peers, understand what they read, are talented in information processing, have digital intelligence, and an advanced level of speaking ability (extensive vocabulary) (Altinta & Llgun, 2015). This finding was similar to Elewuetu (2017), who discovered that the academic performance of secondary school students in Kwara State was high due to their high emotional intelligence level.

This study's findings supported those of James, Donald, and Kateryna (2016), who investigated giftedness and academic success in college and university. This study's finding, however, contradicted that of Sa'ad (2015), who discovered that secondary school students' academic performance was poor. The disparity between the finding of this study and that of Sa'ad (2015) could be attributed to the socioeconomic status of the students involved. It should be noted that Sa'ad's study was conducted among non-gifted secondary school students, whereas the current study was conducted among gifted secondary school students.

Another outcome of this study indicated that emotional intelligence, personality traits, and academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria had a strong link. This suggests that gifted student in Nigeria performed well academically due to an increase in emotional intelligence and the display of positive personality qualities. This result corroborated the work of Sharma, Manga and Nagar (2016) who discovered a link between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Similarly, Chamundeswari (2013) found a strong link between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among Indian secondary school pupils. The findings of this study, on the other hand, contradicted those of Ghazi, Shahzada, and Ullah (2013), who found no significant link between students' personality qualities and academic achievement. The variations in results observed between the current study and that of Ghazi, Shahzada, and Ullah (2013) could be due to changes in study locations and sample numbers.

### **Conclusion**

It was concluded based on the findings of this study that emotional intelligence and personality traits correlate positively with the academic performance of gifted secondary school students in Nigeria.

The two non-cognitive variables contributed to the academic performance of the gifted secondary school students in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was therefore recommended that Nigerian gifted secondary school students should be taught by teachers, educational psychologist and school guidance and counsellors about individual differences in academic performance, as evidenced by the fact that two personality traits (openness to experience and agreeableness) have a stronger association with academic success than the other three (Conscientious, neuroticism extraversion). It was further recommended that emotional intelligence and personality traits seminars should be organised to sensitize stakeholders on the need to understand the importance of emotional intelligence and personality traits to the academic performance of gifted students in Nigeria.

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