



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS PREDICTORS OF SUICIDE IDEATION AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated emotional intelligence domains (self-awareness and self-management) as predictors of suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in Federal Universities in the South – South. A sample of 380 youths identified as suicide ideators were drawn from a population of 7851 using simple random sampling and proportionate sampling technique. The study adopted the correlational research design. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) and Suicide Ideation Scale (SIS) were used as instruments for data collection. The construct validity of the instruments was determined through factor analysis SPSS software. Copies of the multivariate instrument were administered to 30 youths for pilot test. Each instrument was subjected to factor analysis, the following coefficients were obtained; self-awareness 0.70 and self-management 0.72 while reliability index of 0.69, 0.69 and 0.79 were realized for; self-awareness, self-management and suicide ideation respectively using Cronbach Alpha Method. Simple linear regression was used to analyze the data generated. Specifically, the associated Anova was used to test the tenability of the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. Findings were that self-awareness does significantly predict youths' suicide ideation while self-management does not significantly predict Nigerian youths' suicide ideation in South-south.

KEYWORDS: *Self-awareness, Self-management and Suicide Ideation among Federal University Youths.*

Introduction

A society that is bedeviled with so much hardship and little or no opportunity for its citizens to find a legitimate means of sustenance can only breed all kinds of atrocities, delinquencies, anxiety and depression among the young people. Rise in level of unemployment has also resulted in increase and rise in the degree of crimes being committed. A soothsayer is not required to see that crimes are mostly carried out by the youths who by virtue of age are more energetic, courageous and fearless. The act of committing crime in itself is a very daring one and highly risky.

In the researcher's opinion, only a handful of the Nigerian youths would willingly disregard a good job or business and plunge into crime in order to make quick money. The current situation is such that the youths cannot be accused of wanting to make quick money but rather majority of them are sincerely seeking for a means of survival. Quite a number have put aside their certificates in view of the absence of white collar jobs, and have gone into trading and other vocations. This also, has proved to be a very herculean venture.

Let us recall to mind, that those youths who for one reason or the other didn't even obtain a certificate through formal education have been struggling in their different fields and vocations to make ends meet, but not with so much success. All these put together seems to be part of the reason why suicidal ideation among Nigerian youths pose as a threat that should be addressed. There is need to take a close look at the variables associated with, and considered to be risk factors for suicide ideation. Emotional intelligence has been seen and ascertained to serve as a protective factor for both suicidal ideation and suicide attempt, among samples of adolescents without any history of traumatic events (Cha, C.B. & Nock, M.C., 2009). Similarly, previous researches confirmed that among the youths who are depressed, high emotional intelligence protects against suicidal ideation (Abdollahi, Carlbring, Khanbani & Ghahfarokhi, 2016).

The term 'Emotional Intelligence' came into definite use in the 90s. It is a term that was used to point to a form of social intelligence which involves the ability to check a person's feeling by himself or herself and also check other persons' feelings. The essence of checking this feeling is to enable the individual to discern between the various existing feelings both



within him and within others or among them and then use the information gotten to guide one's way of thinking and approaching or viewing issue, alongside one's actions. Goleman (1995) categorized emotional intelligence into the following categories: Self-Awareness, Self-Management or Regulation, Relationship-Management, Social Awareness or Social Skills and lastly Motivation. For the purpose of this study, only two of the categories is discussed which are: self-awareness and self-management. An individual is considered to be emotionally intelligent if same individual is able to decipher and understand not only his own feelings but that of others as well, and capable of reconciling the two and applying the outcome in his operations in order to make positive impact and have success in whatever is involved. Goleman (1995) perceives emotional intelligence to be abilities such as being able to motivate one self and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulses and delay gratification, to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swapping the ability to think, to empathize and to hope. More accurate analysis and presentation of emotions is done through emotional intelligence. This bears on, and enhances effectiveness in solving problems. When emotions are not properly deduced and presented, the probability of handling issues incompetently becomes rather higher. In effect, for accurate problem or task solving, accurate understanding and presentation of emotion cannot be overemphasized or neglected. Self-awareness as one of the component of emotional intelligence is the possibility of one recognizing his emotions, his drives, strengths and weaknesses and how they relate to others. The ability of one to know or realize his values, goals and feelings at any given time constitutes self-awareness. This recognition and awareness guides the individual in decision making, in guiding actions and making choices. According to Olowo (2011) individuals with high level of self-awareness are inclined towards understanding their emotions and needs and how they influence their thinking pattern, behaviour and achievement. Proper self-assessment poses as the focal point of achievement. They are also able to find out or seek out those who are better placed to be of help and add value to them. Goleman (2006) sees self-awareness as recognizing a feeling as it happens, and this he says is the keystone of emotional intelligence. This makes for self-understanding. People with greater certainty of their feelings are better pilots of their lives. Self-awareness means being "aware of both our mood and our thoughts about that mood". Self-awareness is the ability to identify one's own internal states, preferences, resources and intuition (Goleman, 2006). It involves recognizing one's emotions and their effects, as well as self-confidence which refers to a strong sense of strength and limit. It is a general knowledge and understanding of one's strength and limitations.

Self-awareness is the most crucial competency associated with emotional intelligence in every area of life. According to Yeung (2009); the first step to becoming emotionally intelligent is to become as self-aware as possible. Self-awareness is the ability for one to recognize his or her emotions and their effects. Self-

awareness refers to the capacity of becoming the object of one's own attention (Duval & Wicklund, as cited in Morin, 2011). The concept of self-awareness was perceived to have two dimensions (Duval & Wicklund as cited in Carden et al, 2021). First, subjective self-awareness, which is a state of consciousness where attention is focused on events external to the person, and second, objective self-awareness, which is focused exclusively upon the self. This two-dimensional approach also proposes that self-awareness is attained through focusing attention on oneself, which initiates a comparison against self-developed standards.

Self-awareness consists of emotional abilities that enable us to be more effective and form outstanding relationships in the school, work place, and family, among others. Self-awareness is the ability for an individual to recognize his or her emotions and their effects. Studies suggest that people who are aware of their emotions are more effective in their every area of their lives. They recognize and understand their moods, emotions and needs and can perceive and anticipate how their actions affect others. People with great certainty about their feelings manage their lives well and are able to direct their positive feelings towards accomplishing tasks. Self-awareness competencies include emotional self-awareness, accurate self-awareness and self-confidence. Accurate self-Assessment involves knowing one's inner resources, abilities and limits. People with this competency are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, reflective, learning from experience, open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning and self-development. Self-confidence involves a strong sense of one's worth and capabilities. According to Goleman, (1998), People with this competence present themselves with self-assurance, have presence, can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right, are decisive, able to make sound decisions under pressures. People with self-confidence typically see themselves as efficacious, able to take on challenges and to master new jobs or skills. They believe themselves to be catalysts, movers and initiators, and feel that their abilities stack up favourably in comparison to others. Research suggests that individuals with high levels of self-awareness, that is, when there is congruence between self-other ratings, have good working relationships with others in his/her environment. This implies when students have high self-awareness, they will be able to manage their challenges and improve their abilities to stay strong under pressures or crisis as well as improve academic performance thereby limiting mental health disorders.

People, who are self-regulate, usually do not allow themselves to become excessively angry, too disappointed or jealous even in the face of situations that normally elicit such energies. They do not make impulsive and careless decisions even when they are upset. That is to say, they think before they act. Regulating emotions in order to make better and profitable sense out of them is self-management. Self-management of emotions empowers youths to get a grip on their internal make-up thereby



helping them adjust their behaviours to the presiding environment. This leads to high self-worth and image. Suicide ideation is defined as thinking about, considering, or planning suicide. The first step towards ideation is pain, regardless of the source of pain (Klonsky, May and Saffer, 2016). According to APA (2013) Dictionary, suicide ideation refers to thoughts or a preoccupation with killing oneself, often as a symptom of a major depressive episode (<https://dictionary.apa.org/ideation>) it goes further to differentiate between suicide ideation and suicidality by expressly panting out suicidality as the risk of suicide, usually indicated by suicidal ideation or intent, especially as evident in the presence of a well elaborated suicidal plan.

However, the researcher noted that some scholars use the terminologies terms, suicidality and suicide ideation interchangeably. This implies that suicide ideation and suicidal ideation means one and the same thing and considered same in this study. From the stables of National Youth Mental Health Foundation, NYMHF, suicidal ideation refers to thoughts that life is not worth living and ranges in intensity from mere passing thoughts to definite and precise well thought out plans for killing oneself. It is a total engrossment with self-destruction and annihilation (Nock, Borges & Bromet, 2008). Suicide Ideation (SI) is categorized into passive suicide ideation and active suicide ideation. Passive suicide ideation has to do with the ideation that is limited to mere wish to die but never goes further to make any plan of how to inflict lethal self-harm to kill or end one's life. Also, passive ideation at the same time shows a level of indifference to any accidental death. Active suicidal ideation simply put, is the extension of thoughts of suicide to include the different ways to die or way to actually carry out the act of killing oneself. This means forming a plan to die, which goes beyond mere thoughts of death or wishes to die (Kumar, 2017).

Suicidal ideation means entertaining thoughts, ideas or ruminations about the possibility of ending one's life (Barry, 2019). According to Grosby Ortega and Melanson (2011) suicide ideation is defined as thinking about, considering, or planning suicide. Some scholars have expressed some concern over the mix ups in terminologies and how it affects research processes. Suicide ideation, suicide attempts, suicidal behaviours, suicide, etc are some of the concepts that are mixed up. As earlier noted, high self-awareness has influence on performance in various areas of life and that includes performance and social relationships. In the same vein, feelings of low self-esteem, depression or anxiety might also be affected by self-awareness of the student. This is why the researcher intends to examine if a relationship exist among the variable of self-awareness and self-management with suicide ideation among youths or undergraduate students. Self-management is the ability to regulate distressing effects like anxiety, anger and inhibit emotional impulsivity (Goleman, 2016). Activities and happenings around is more than enough to elicit negative reactions to situations. Emotions result in impulses which if not

properly guided could disrupt well set out events or plans and goals. Managing one's impulses, controlling and redirecting emotions enables one adapt to unforeseen circumstances and changes that occur. This is self-management and therefore capable of inhibiting suicide ideation.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the conduct of the study:

1. To what extent does emotional intelligence domain, self-awareness, independently predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in the south-south?
2. To what extent does self-management independently predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in the south-south?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of the study:

1. Emotional intelligence domain, self-awareness independently does not significantly predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in the south-south.
2. Self-management independently does not significantly predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in the south-south.

Methodology

The design of this study is correlational. According to Kpolovie (2010, p. 108), "correlational design is a design that is patterned after the statistical tools most suitable for eliciting the form and nature of relationship that exist among the variables under investigation". He went further to say that the design has a predictor and criterion variable which are correlated and the correlation coefficient resulting from it serves as the basis for prediction.

The population for this study comprised of youths from federal universities in three faculties (one faculty from each university) from three states in the South-south geo-political zone. The universities are university of Port-Harcourt: 2817, university of Uyo: 4154, federal university Otuoke: 880, making a total of 7851. From the population of 7851, 380 sample size formula via Taro Yamens consisted the sample size which is made up of 137 students from university of Port-Harcourt, 201 from university of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State and 42 from Federal university Otuoke in Bayelsa State. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select the sample size. Instruments for the data collection were adapted for this study. Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, developed by Daniel Goleman in 1995 and Suicide Ideation Scale developed by M.D. Rudd in 1989. The EIQ instrument consists of subsections that elicited information on the various variables. The instruments utilized four point likert scales which required the respondents to indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with the items, thus: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and



Strongly Disagree (SD). Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) consisted of sub-sections with 5 items each on self-awareness and self-management respectively. Suicide Ideation Scale (SIS) consisted of one section with 10 items. To ascertain the validity of the instrument, draft of the questionnaires were given to two (2) experts in the department of Educational Measurement and Evaluation for vetting. All corrections and modifications were later incorporated into the final draft. Validated copies of the instruments were pilot tested with 30 students from federal university of technology Owerri (FUTO) in Imo state of Nigeria. Their responses were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha method and reliability coefficient of 0.69, 0.69 and 0.75 were obtained for self-awareness, self-management and

suicide ideation respectively. Simple linear regression was used to answer the research questions, while t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA), associated with regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results are presented on table 1-4 according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question 1: To what extent does self-awareness independently predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south?

Table 1: Simple regression analysis showing R correlation of self-awareness independently predicting suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.115 ^a	.013	.011	6.654

From the analysis in table 1, the relationship between emotional intelligence domain (self-awareness) and suicide is $R = .115$, R^2 value is .013, the adjusted R^2 value is .011 while the standard error of estimates is 6.654. Furthermore, the R^2 value of .013 signifies that about 1.3% of emotional intelligence domain (self-awareness) predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youth in federal universities in the south south.

Hypothesis 1: Emotional intelligence domain (self-awareness) independently does not significantly predict suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA test associated with Simple Regression of Emotional intelligence domain (self-awareness) on suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Result
1 Regression	224.935	1	224.935	5.080	.025 ^b	significant (reject H_0)
Residual	16735.686	378	44.274			
Total	16960.621	379				

The calculated F value in table 2 is 5.080 while the sig value is .025, therefore since the sig ($P=0.025 < 0.05$) is less than the alpha value of 0.05 at 379 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate retained meaning that actually emotional intelligence domain (self-awareness) does predict suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.

Research Question 2: To what extent does emotional intelligence domain (self-management) independently predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south?

**Table 3: Simple regression analysis showing R correlations of emotional intelligence domain (self-management) independently predicting suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.073 ^a	.005	.003	6.681

From the analysis in table 3, the relationship between emotional intelligence domain (self-management) and suicide is $R = .073$, R^2 value is .005, the adjusted R^2 value is .003 while the standard error of estimates is 6.681. Furthermore, the R^2 value of .005 signifies that about 0.5% of emotional intelligence domain (self-management) predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youth in federal universities in the south south.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence domain (self-management) independently does not significantly predict suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.

Table 4: Summary of ANOVA test associated with Simple Regression of Emotional intelligence domain (self- management) on suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Result
1	Regression	90.538	1	90.538	2.029	.155 ^b	Not significant (accept Ho)
	Residual	16870.083	378	44.630			
	Total	16960.621	379				

The calculated F value in table 4 is 2.029 while the sig value is .155, therefore since the sig ($P=0.363 > 0.05$) is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 at 379 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis is retained, confirming that actually emotional intelligence domain (self-management) does not predict suicide ideation among Nigerian youths in federal universities in the south south.

DISCUSSION

The result revealed that among the emotional intelligence domain (self-awareness) independently does predict suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths. The finding of this study is not in agreement with the study of Okafor and Oyana (2022), who investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and suicidal tendencies (ideation) among undergraduate students of the University of Benin. The finding of the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between self-awareness domain of emotional intelligence and undergraduate students of University of Benin. But some other works differed from the result of these studies. The studies of Johnson, Ogunami and Ayokanmi (2021) who examined risk factors for suicide ideation, self-harm and self-awareness among Babcock University students revealed that there is a significant prediction of suicide ideation among the students by self-awareness. Some other studies that revealed self-awareness to significantly predict suicide ideation include the works of Ishikura, Morimoto, Yoshizawat, Otsuka, Tanaka, Kinulawa, Horluchi and

Nakashima (2001), and Mohammad (2019). Ishikura et al examined factors associated with anxiety, depression, self-awareness, and suicide ideation while Mohamad (2019) investigated Empathy/relationship management, self-regulation, adaptability (self-awareness) and depression as factors influencing suicide ideation among graduates and post graduate students in Padesh.

The result revealed that among the emotional intelligence domain (self-management) independently does not predict suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths. Self-Management or Self-regulation is the ability one has to recognize and be in control of their feelings and emotions at different times. Some studies have also shown self-regulation as having no predictive powers on suicide ideation. The results of Jose, Limonero and Sabado (2018), who examined relationship between Emotional Intelligence and negative affect on suicide risk (ideation) showed that self-regulation does not have any significant prediction of suicide ideation in young university students. On the contrary, some works are not in agreement with the above studies. The findings of Mohamad (2019) who investigated Empath/relationship management, self-regulation, adaptability (Self-awareness) and depression as factors influencing suicide ideation revealed that the emotional intelligence domain of self-management does predict suicide ideation among students. Same goes for Okafor and Oyana (2022) that showed self-management to have predictive powers on suicide ideation.



Conclusion

Suicide ideation is a major challenge among the youths across the nation, particularly in the South south. Identifying and discussing the emotional intelligence as predictors of suicide ideation among the Nigerian youths in south-south is very essential in curbing the growing and increasing menace. Several studies have been carried out on suicide more than on suicide ideation in the south - south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Also, from the result it was revealed that self-awareness does predict suicide ideation while self- management do not predict suicide ideation.

Future research should focus on further identifying other domains of emotional intelligence and risk factors that may contribute to suicide ideation among the youths.

Recommendations

Recommendations for this study are based on the results of the findings which are as follows:

1. The counsellors and lecturers should help the youths to be trained in the domains of emotional intelligence which include self-awareness, self-regulation, relationship management and social awareness.
2. Acquiring skills in emotional intelligence competencies will help sustain them and help them handle challenges competently, therefore stakeholders which includes parents, churches, non-governmental organizations should rise to the situation by providing ways for the youths to acquire these competencies. .

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