

DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ATHI-RIVER SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: *This study sought to examine the demographic correlates of emotional intelligence among adolescents in secondary schools within 13-18 years. Simple, purposive and systematic sampling techniques were used to select four secondary schools and 120 participants. Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory-Youth version (BarOn EQ-i: YV) was used to measure emotional intelligence. Results of the study revealed a significant correlation between emotional intelligence with gender ($p = 0.045$), age category ($p = 0.028$) and class of study ($p=0.025$). No significant relationship was found between EI and religious affiliation, who the adolescent lived with, fathers' occupation and whether the mother was working. The results will guide future studies to determine factors associated with the formation and development of EI among adolescents.*

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Secondary students, Correlates, Demographic Characteristics, Adolescents*

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become an increasingly important topic of research in the fields of psychology and management. The overwhelming focus and growth in emotional intelligence in scholarly work is partially fueled by the premise that emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of job performance as is IQ (Goleman, 1995). In academic research, various terminologies have been used with reference to emotional intelligence. They include emotional competence (Goleman, 1995) and empathic accuracy (Saarami, 2001).

There are varied definitions of emotional intelligence in the educational literature. According to (Bar-On, 2000), emotional intelligence is a set of emotional, social and personal capabilities that enable an individual to cope with the pressures of life effectively. On the other hand, Petrides and Frederickson (2004) defines emotional intelligence as “a constellation of emotional-related self-perceptions and dispositions located at lower levels of personality hierarchies” (p.2).

Adolescence is a transitional period characterized by daunting challenges in emotional development (Conger & Galambos, 1997). Developing the emotional abilities enhances adolescents coping skills which will ultimately result to better mental health (Downey, Johnson, Hansen, Birney, & Stough, 2010). Similarly, emotional health is vital to effective learning and education (Serrat, 2017). Fernamdez-Berrocal, Alcaide, Extremera, and Pizarro (2006) observed that emotional deficiency among adolescents puts them at risk of developing anxiety and depression.

Numerous empirical studies have been conducted to determine demographic predictors of emotional intelligence among adolescents (Ngondi, Khasakhala, & Yugi, 2020; Ucak & Yildirim, 2020; Irfan & Kausar, 2020; Zahra, Shuja, & Irfan, 2014; Harrod & Scheer, 2005). For instance, Kothari, Skuse, Wakefield, and

Micali (2013) observed that home environment is the basic foundation for the development of emotional skills through healthy interactions with siblings and parents. Moreover, parents play an important role in assisting the children identify their emotions, describe them, and learn how to regulate them in social context.

Fatimah, Mahlindayu, and Nik (2013) elucidated that levels of emotional intelligence of children could vary depending on whether both or one parent is working. This finding is confirmed by Vijayalaxmi & Kadapatti (2013) who reported a strong significant improvement in EI among adolescents whose mother's were house wives, in comparison to adolescents whose mothers' were working. Work related stress greatly impact parents' emotional status and more so if they occupy high positions in their work place.

Findings of a study conducted by Ngondi, Khasakhala, and Yugi (2020) among adolescents showed a statistically significant correlation between gender and emotional intelligence with females having higher emotional intelligence mean scores than males. In addition, both genders differed significantly in two dimensions of emotional intelligence; male adolescents had higher scores on general mood while females had higher scores on stress management skills. Nonetheless, findings from other studies have reported no significant gender differences in EI among adolescents (Bakhshi, Gupta, & Singh, 2016; Lawrence & Deepa, 2013; Oommen, 2015).

Regarding emotional intelligence and age, certain studies suggest that emotional intelligence improves with age and can be learnt through life experiences (Esnaola, Revuelta, Ros, & Sarasa, 2017; Goldenberg, Matheson, & Mantle, 2006; Goleman, 1998; Kafetsios, 2004). For example, people aged between 40 and 49 score significantly higher for general EI than those in the 20-29 age group (Bar-On, 1997a). Nevertheless, certain studies suggest that age has no significant effect on EI (Cakan & Altun, 2005).

A study conducted by Harrod and Scheer (2005) showed a positive correlation between levels of emotion intelligence and higher income levels in the family, implying that economic hardships in the family affects the level of emotional intelligence. Fatimah, Mahlindayu, and Nik (2013) observed that individuals from economically endowed family background may not experience stress in comparison to those from low-income families. Conversely, Sharma and Vaid (2005) observed that children from low-income family background exhibit better emotional stability in comparison to their counterparts from middle-income family background.

Ucak & Yildirim (2020) sought to determine the relationship between adolescent's emotional intelligence and grade level. They found a significant relationship between EI and grade level. The highest mean score was among the 5th graders, and it decreased with the increasing grade level. Equally a study conducted by Aydin (2018) revealed that the EI mean scores of 5th and 6th grade students was statistically higher than that of the 10th and 11th graders and that EI decreased with increase in grade level. On the contrary, Iseri (2016) found no significant correlation between EI and grade level.

The aforementioned studies were mostly done in western countries. There is paucity of literature on the sociodemographic predictors of emotional intelligence among adolescents in secondary schools in Kenya. Therefore, this study aimed at establishing the sociodemographic predictors of emotional intelligence among adolescents in secondary schools in Athi-River Sub County, Kenya.

2.0 Methodology

The sample consisted of 60 boys and 60 girls (N=120) in the age group of 13-18 years, studying in private secondary schools in Athi-River sub-county. The mean age of students was 15.93 (SD=1.168). Purposive, simple and stratified sampling methods were used in selecting four single gender – 2 girls only and 2 boys' only - private secondary schools. A validated version of BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version

(BarOn EQ-i: YV) was used to measure emotional intelligence. This instrument consists of 60 items (long version) that are self-administered. The responses are in a four Likert-scale that ranges from 1 for “very seldom or not true of me” to 4 for “very often true or true of me”. A separate questionnaire was used to get sociodemographic characteristics of the participants. Data collected was coded, fed into SPSS and analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

3.0 Results

In this study, data on participants emotional intelligence and sociodemographic characteristics were sought. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to examine the demographic predictors of emotional intelligence.

3.1 Key Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Key Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Age Category	13-15	42	35.0
	16-18	78	65.0
Gender	Male	60	50.0
	Female	60	50.0
Class	Form 1	39	32.5
	Form 2	41	34.2
	Form 3	40	33.3
Number of Siblings	No siblings	9	7.5
	1-2	28	23.3
	3 & above	83	69.2
Mothers' employment status	Working	97	80.8
	Not working	21	17.5
	Not applicable	2	1.7

Table 1 presents participants sociodemographic characteristics. In terms of age a majority 65% of the participants were aged 16-18 years followed by 13-15 years at 35%. Gender distribution was equal at 50%. The distribution of participants by class showed that form two class was higher at 34.2% than form three class at 33.3% and form one class at 32.5%. Concerning the number of siblings, participants with three and more siblings was 69.2%, those with 1 to 2 siblings was 23.3% and those without siblings 7.7%. In addition, the proportion of those whose mothers were working was higher 80.8% than those whose mothers were not

working 17.5% and this variable was not applicable to 1.7% of the participants who reported not having a biological mother.

3.2 Levels of Emotional Intelligence among Participants

Table 2: Levels of Emotional Intelligence among Participants

Levels of Emotional Intelligence	Frequency	Percent (%)
High	4	3.3
Average	69	57.5
Low	32	26.7
Very low	11	9.2
Markedly low	4	3.3
Total	120	100.0

Results of participants frequency on levels of EI showed that most of them 57.5% had average level of EI, 26.7% had low, 9.2% had very low. Moreover, an equal percentage of participants at 3.3% recorded high and markedly low level of EI.

Table 3: Mean Emotional Intelligence with respect to Gender, Age and Class

Variable	Total (N=120)	Mean	Std. dev	Std. error of mean	
Gender	Male	60	89.93	10.533	1.360
	Female	60	92.80	11.232	1.450
Age	13-15	42	94.17	9.880	1.524
	16-18	78	89.86	11.240	1.273
Class	Form 1	39	94.03	10.424	1.669
	Form 2	41	90.85	12.543	1.959
	Form 3	40	89.30	9.277	1.467

Results in Table 3 indicate that female students had higher mean in emotional intelligence (92.80) than their male counterparts (89.93). Regarding age, 13-15 years old participants had higher mean (94.17) as compared to 16-18 years old participants (89.86). In addition, participants in form 1 had higher mean (94.03) in comparison with Form 2 (90.85) and Form 3 (89.30).

3.3 Correlation between socio-demographic and Emotional Intelligence

Table 4: Nonparametric Spearman’s Correlations showing how Socio-demographic Characteristics Correlate with Emotional Intelligence

	Baseline SS on Total EI	gender	Age category for participants	religious affiliation	Siblings category	who do you live with the mother fathers is working occupation				
Spearman's rho	1.000	.155	-.175	-.179	.119	-.037	-.137	-.125	-.011	
Total Correlation Coefficient										
Significance (1-tailed)		.045	.028	.025	.097	.344	.068	.087	.452	
N	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

The study examined the correlation between sociodemographic characteristics and emotional intelligence (Table 4). Results indicated a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and sociodemographic characteristics such as gender ($p = 0.045$). Concerning age, results indicated a significant negative relationship between EI and age category ($p = 0.028$). Participants’ class of study, results show a significant negative correlation with EI ($p=0.025$).

4.0 Discussion

The results of this study indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between gender and emotional intelligence ($p<0.045$) among secondary school students. Female gender had a higher EI mean score (92.80) in comparison with males (89.93). This result is similar to findings of Chandel and Chopra (2017) who reported a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and gender. Female adolescents had higher emotional intelligence than male counterparts. This was also supported by a study by (Joshi & Dutta, 2014), in which female secondary school students had higher emotional intelligence than male secondary students.

Study findings indicated a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and age category ($p<0.028$). 13-15 years old students had higher mean (94.17) as compared to 16-18 years old students (89.86). As such, emotional intelligence decreased with increase in age category. This result is dissimilar to findings that indicate that emotional intelligence increases with age (Deeksha, 2017; Goldenberg, Matheson, & Mantle, 2006; Goleman, 1998; Kafetsios, 2004). Moreover, other studies have reported no differences in EI with respect to age (Cakan & Altun, 2005; Devi & Narayanamma, 2014; Esnaola, Revuelta, Ros, & Sarasa, 2017; Nicholas & Scott, 2005).

The differences seen in the findings of different studies may have resulted from the inclusion of either a wider age bracket of adolescents or broader inclusion of adolescents and adults in different studies. However, a better understanding of the relationship between emotional intelligence and age category among adolescents can be achieved through further empirical research focusing on specific sub periods within adolescence. Nonetheless, the decrease in EI with increasing age category could be attributed to the emotional sensitivity which comes with adolescence. According to Samorville, Jones, and Casey (2010) adolescents’ confidence in their capacity

to understand and regulate their emotions may decline in the context of the greater emotional sensitivity which comes with onset of puberty.

Concerning class of study, findings indicated a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and class of study ($p < 0.025$). Students in form 1 had higher mean (94.03) in comparison with Form 2 (90.85) and Form 3 (89.30). As such, emotional intelligence decreased with increase in class of study. This result affirms the results of Ucak and Yildirim (2020) which showed that emotional intelligence significantly decreased with increasing grade level. That is, the highest mean score was amongst 5th graders and decreased with increase with grade level. In the same vein, a study by Aydin (2018) indicated that emotional intelligence vary with grade level. mean scores of 5th and 6th grade students was significantly higher than those of the 10th and 11th graders and that emotional intelligence mean score decreased with increase in grade level. The decrease in emotional intelligence of students with increasing grade level might be attributed to the transition period from childhood to adulthood.

4.1 Conclusion

These results revealed a significant correlation between EI with gender, age category and class among secondary school students. Since EI is related to life success and social interactions, hence any demographic characteristic that affects the development of EI is a critical factor in individual and personality development. Varied research findings on the relationship between EI and age presents a knowledge gap that needs to be explored. Focus should be on the different sub periods within adolescence.

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