

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND LOCUS OF CONTROL AS DETERMINANTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined family environment and locus of control as determinants of emotional intelligence among undergraduate students in Benue State. Data were collected among Benue State University undergraduates. Ex post factor design was adopted for the study. Three standardized instruments were used for data collection and analysed using hierarchical regression and correlation. Results showed that family cohesion and expressiveness as well as internal and external locus of control predicted emotion others while expressiveness and internal locus of control were not found to predict emotion own. Further, family cohesion and external locus of control did not predict overall emotional intelligence. The research limitation was the fact that the study did not cover all possible family environment and emotional intelligence factors. The study concluded that government and policy makers alike need to turn to family environment-friendly-policies in order to boost the effect of family environment on emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Family Environment, Locus of Control, Emotional Intelligence, Undergraduate Students

1. Introduction

In recent years emotional intelligence (EI) has become of great interest in psychological research. Emotional intelligence has been described as an individual's ability to appraise, express and regulate emotion in oneself and in others and to utilise these emotions in the thought processes (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). An increasing body of research seems to suggest that emotional intelligence contributes to success at work (Weisinger, 2000), and many studies have investigated the link of emotional intelligence with other constructs such as occupational stress, (Gardner & Stough, 2003; Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002), students academic performance and life satisfaction (Palmer, Donaldson & Stough, 2002). It is believed that emotional intelligence plays an important role in human development and leadership behaviours. Recently, businesses and behavioural scientists have more frequently turned their focus to researching emotional intelligence in the workplace (Cherniss, 2000).

Emotional intelligence is one's ability to understand and regulate one's own emotional responses as well as adapt and respond to others (Mayer, 2002). Specifically, it is the ability to perceive emotions, access knowledge, reflectively regulate emotions and promote emotional and intellectual growth. It could be concerned with understanding of self and others, relating to people, adapting to and coping with immediate surroundings and to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands (Salovey, 2002). In the view of Mayer and Salovey (1987), emotional intelligence comprises four broad and interrelated competencies: perception, appraisal and expression of emotion, using emotion to facilitate thinking, understanding, analyzing, implementing emotional knowledge and managing emotion. George (2002) observed that an emotionally intelligent person has the ability to understand the emotion of others and manage their moods in the social setting. It was estimated that 80% of human success could be attributed to emotional intelligence while the

remaining 20% belong to intelligence quotient (Onu, Asogwa & Obetta, 2013). This means that the emotional intelligence of the undergraduates could determine their ability to understand their competence, access their knowledge to adapt to their immediate study and become more successful in their study. The belief is that the higher the emotional intelligence of an undergraduate, the higher the ability to manage his competence and emotion to produce good result in his field of study. It would be seen that the strength of this relationship may be influenced by the interaction effect of family environment and locus of control. Therefore, the study examined family environment and locus of control as determinants of emotional intelligence among undergraduate students in Benue state.

Family environment is where the foundations of emotional intelligence are first laid, it is a setting the child grows up and acquires some information relating to life. Family environment bearing healthy and high quality characteristics affects the development of the child in many ways like ego concept of the child and his/her emotional and social development. Dergisi (2006); Wiltfang and Scarbecz (2000) have defined the family environment so that the definition will cover the characteristics determining the social status of the parents like educational level, occupational status and professions of the parents as well as the quality of the residence, working conditions of the parents and relations of the siblings. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (2004) defined the environment in which the family lives as a setting of learning which has vital effects on the child. The child is affected by the sources of the family environment to a great degree while gaining experiences relating to life. On condition that the social status of the parents is high, the quality of the environment in which the child grows up increases with this increasing quality (Dergisi, 2006). Social status of the parents, the residence, relations within the family, the number of siblings, socio-economic status (SES), two parents, versus single parents households, divorce, parenting

practices and aspirations of maternal characteristics, family size, neighbourhood, the relations among the siblings determine the characteristics of the family environment (Marjorbanks, 1999). Family as a setting of learning has vital effects on the child. Family environment is key to a student's life and outside the school becomes the most important influence on the student learning and emotional intelligence. The family environment of a child is most commonly determined by combining parent's education level, occupational status and income level (Jeynes, 2002). Studies have repeatedly found that family environment most specifically socioeconomic income affects student's outcomes and emotional intelligence. Students from low SES context earn lower test scores and more likely to drop out of school and more likely to have low emotional intelligence (Hochschild, 2003, Eamon, 2005).

Family environment is a place which influence emotional intelligence (Biradar, 2006; Goleman, 2008). Goleman (2008) ascertained by reviewing hundred of studies on how parents treat their children-whether with harsh discipline or empathic understanding, with indifference or warmth and so on and has deep and lasting consequences for the child's emotional intelligence. Only recently, though, have there been hard data showing that having emotionally intelligent parents is itself of enormous benefit to a child. The way a couple handles the feelings between them in addition to their direct dealings with a child impart powerful lessons to their children, who are astute learners, attuned to the subtlest emotional recharges in the family (Biradar, 2006). Therefore it is considered that family life or family environment is the first school for emotional learning, in this intimate cauldron children learn how to feel about themselves and how others will react to their feelings, how to think about these feelings and what choices they have in reacting, how to read and express hopes and fears. This emotional schooling operates not just through the things that family environment such as what parents say and do directly to children but also in the models they offer for handling their own feelings and those that pass between husband and wife (Biradar, 2006).

An assessment is feasible considering various factors in child development. The relationship between the family environment and the development of emotional intelligence or academic processes has been observed. In these studies, different family structures have been formed and then the reflection of these structures on the emotional intelligence development of children has been researched and findings revealed that family environment influence emotional intelligence among youths (Manuel, 2002).

Another variable of interest is locus of control. Locus of control means the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events and causes of their actions. Locus of control is a personality construct which refers to an individual's perception of the locus of event as determined internally by his/her own behaviour versus fate, luck or external circumstances. That is, it refers to individually perceived sources of control over certain behaviour or events (Onu, Asogwa, & Obeta, 2013). Rotter (1966) established two loci as internal and external. Individuals who make choice primarily on their own are considered having internal locus of control. Such individuals see themselves as the main cause of what happens to them and their success in their environment or profession whether positive or negative. According to Bush (2005), individuals who exhibit high degrees of internal locus of control tend to be more confident in their studies and actively seek chances for achievement. This class of people (undergraduates) have higher level of academic performance, are more activated in their academic work and exhibit higher level of participation in the class. Perkins (2008) supported that people with internal locus of control are considered less susceptible to social influence. This indicates that undergraduates with internal locus of control are less susceptible to social influences. Such undergraduates are more confident in their academics, highly motivated to seek better information that will enable them to adjust psychologically and technically in their studies for better performance and higher achievement.

On the other hand, Onu et al (2013) stated that external locus of control refer to the perception of positive or negative events as being unrelated to self-behaviour and accordingly beyond personal control. Hans (2000) emphasized that people with external locus of control believe that their behaviour or success is guided by fate, luck or other external circumstances. Such people believe that their own behaviour does not matter much and that rewards in life are generally outside their control. Vanger (2006) observed that individuals with external locus of control have predisposition to believe that they have no control over their environment than others.

Judge and Bono (2001) reported that locus of control is a significant predictor of performance. Thomas, Sorensen and Eby (2006) conducted a meta-analysis and reported that locus of control was positively associated with favorable academic outcomes, such as positive experiences and greater academic motivation. Individuals that score high on emotional intelligence also should have more positive academic experiences. Thus, individuals with high emotional intelligence have an ability to monitor their own and others' feelings, they take charge of their behaviors and control their environment which is consistent with internal locus of control individuals.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine whether family environment (family cohesion and expressiveness) will significantly determine emotional intelligence (emotion-others and emotion-own).
- ii. To examine whether locus of control and external locus of control will significantly determine emotional intelligence (emotion-others and emotion-own).

1.2 Research Hypotheses

- i. Family environment (family cohesion and expressiveness) will significantly determine emotional intelligence (emotion-others and emotion-own).
- ii. There will be significant difference between internal locus of control and external locus of control on emotional intelligence (emotion-others and emotion-own).

2. Method

This study employs an ex post facto research design. The independent variables in the study are family environment and locus of control while the dependent variable is emotional intelligence. The first variable family environment is measured at 2 levels (family cohesion and expressiveness) also the second variable which is locus of control is measured at 2 levels (internal and external locus of control).

2.1 Participants

Participants were 488 undergraduate students purposively selected from Benue State University, Makurdi whose age average was 26 years. Sex distributions of respondents showed that male respondents were 313 (64.1%) while female were 175 (35.9%).

2.2 Instruments

Family Environment

The Family Cohesion and Expressiveness subscales of the Moos (1974) Family Environment Scale was used to measure family environment. The family cohesion subscale is a nine item scale intended to measure the degree of commitment, help, and support family members provide for one another. It has a reliability alpha of .80, a test-retest reliability of .86 (2 month testing interval) and an internal consistency of .78

Expressiveness subscale measure the extent to which family members are encouraged to express their feelings directly. It has a reliability alpha to be .78.

Locus of Control

The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale-College Form (ANSIE-C; Nowicki & Duke, 1974) in order to capture the general LOC with this specific population; college undergraduate. This scale was chosen because it is not affected by social (Ieva, 1999). The reliability of the ANSIE-C (Nowicki & Duke, 1974) has been strong (Lefcourt, 1991). The Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale-College Form has internal consistency split-half reliability indexes to vary from .74 and .86. It has an alpha value of .70.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence scale developed by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dornheim (1998) was used to measure emotional intelligence. The tool contains 33 items using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents 'strongly disagree' and 5 'strongly agree'. Total score may range from 33 to 165. The high scores indicate participants' higher ability to recognize and manage emotions. In this content (Austin, Saklofske, Huang & McKenney, 2004) reported a good internal consistency of the scale with a Cronbach alpha of .85. The Schutte et al emotional intelligence scale has six (6) domains which are directly related to the concept of emotional intelligence. The domains include Positive Affect; Items on this factor relate to positive affect in personal experiences, Emotion-Others which include the respondents' experience of other people's emotions. The third domain is Happy Emotions. The items this domain include aspects such as good mood, positive emotions, happiness and joy. The fourth domain is Emotions-Own and included respondents' perception of their own emotions. The fifth factor was labelled Non-verbal Emotions. The items on this domain included aspects such as non-verbal messages that the person send and receive from others, and how the person interprets these non-verbal emotions. The sixth domain is Emotional Management, reflecting respondents' indication that they can control

their emotions or fail to manage their emotions. However, emotion-own and emotion-others were measured.

2.3 Research Procedure

To administer the questionnaire to respondents, the purposive and stratified sampling methods were adopted. Questionnaires were administered to undergraduate students at the two campuses of the Benue State University. Participants were stratified into sex, gender, religious affiliation, level of study, age range and ethnic group based on self report.

2.4 Method of Data Analysis

Hierarchical regression was used for data analysis.

3. Results

The following findings were obtained from the study.

Table 1: Correlation showing the Relationship between Demographic Variables, Family Environment and Locus of Control on Emotion-Others, Emotion-Own and Emotional Intelligence

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. age	-											
2. sex	-.18*	-										
3. religion	.28**	.02	-									
4. ethnicity	-.03	.67*	.02	-								
5. level of study	-.14	.07	.03	.34	-							
6. Family cohesion	-.04	.18**	.11	.54	.03	-						
7. Expressiveness	-.23	.12	.22*	-.02	.37**	.07	-					
8. Internal locus of control	.09	.14	.13	.09	.12*	-.13	.24*	-				
9. External locus of control	.12*	.65*	.31**	.12	.23	.15	.20*	.33**	-			
10. Emotion-others	.15	.34	.07	.07	.12	.13	.22**	-.40**	.17*	-		
11. Emotion-own	.37**	.22**	.13	.18*	.63**	.24*	.13	.19*	.13	-.12	-	
12. Emotional intelligence	.33**	-.23	.11	.11	.62*	.33**	.24*	.20*	.50*	.33**	.20*	-

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression of Emotion-others and Emotion-own, and Emotional Intelligence on the Family Environment and Locus of Control Controlling for Demographic Variables.

Independent variable	Dependent Variable								
	Emotion-others			Emotion-own			Emotional intelligence		
	Step 1 (β)	Step 2 (β)	Step 3 (β)	Step 1 (β)	Step 2 (β)	Step 3 (β)	Step 1 (β)	Step 2 (β)	Step 3 (β)
Age	.212*	.174*	.205*	.010	.780	.009	.262*	.252**	.091
Sex	.341	.168*	.126	-.064	.678	-.009	.014	.135	.273**
Religion	.317	.543	.154	.026	.182**	-.032	.215	.195*	.241
Ethnicity	-.227**	.567*	.543*	.114	.128	.042	.158	.405	.188
Level of study	.871	.023	.023	-.014	.890	.803**	.116	.016	-.418
Family cohesion		.689**	.214*		.774**	.182**		.054	.057
Expressiveness		.178*	.194**		.164**	-.063		.204**	.045**
Internal locus of control			.189**			.061			-.181*
External locus of control			-.215**			.741*			.141
R ²	.049	.601	.541	.013	.117	.013	.065	.326	.345
Adj. R ²	.039	.472	.6	.008	.65	.062	.045	.286	.01
ΔR ²	.049	.453	.04	.013	.19	.004	.065	.261	.019
F- ratio	3.42	18.09*	17.88*	.07	3.36*	6.23**	3.27*	8.22**	7.90**
Δ F-ratio	3.42	24.77**	9.60**	.07	4.34*	1.46	3.27*	9.53**	3.90*

*p<.05 **p<.001

In answering the research hypotheses raised in the present study, hierarchical multiple regression and correlation analyses were used. Emotional intelligence and its two facets; emotion-others and emotion-own, were regressed on the predictor variables (family environment and locus of control), while the demographic variables of age, sex, religion, ethnicity and level of study were the control variables. The results of the analyses are presented on Table 1, while that of the hierarchical regression are on Table 2.

Age, sex, religion and ethnicity had no significant joint influence on emotion-others ($R^2 = .049$, $F = 3.42$) but age had significant independent positive influence ($\beta = .212$, $p < .05$), while ethnicity showed a significant negative independent influence ($\beta = -.227$, $p < .01$). This means that as an individual's age increases, the tendency to control others emotion increases, and as they gain more experience in their life their tendency to control emotions of others increases. However, the correlation coefficient (Table 1) for both age ($r = .15$) and ethnicity ($r = .07$) were not significant when the other demographic variables were not controlled.

In step two, family environment variables were entered along with the demographic variables and all had significant joint influence on emotion others ($R^2 = .601$, $F = 18.09$, $p < .05$), accounting for 60% variance in emotion others. The inclusion of the family environment variables resulted in 45.3% variance change ($\Delta R^2 = .453$) from what was in place when only the demographic variables were introduced. It is observed that age ($\beta = .174$, $p = .05$), sex ($\beta = .168$, $p = .05$), and ethnicity ($\beta = .140$, $p = .05$) contributed independently in predicting emotion others.

In addition family cohesion ($\beta = .699$, $p < .01$) and expressiveness ($\beta = .178$, $p < .05$), contributed independently, in positive directions, in the joint prediction of emotion others. The correlation coefficient for family cohesion ($r = .13$, $p > .05$) indicated no relationship on emotion others while expressiveness ($r = .22$, $p < .01$) a positive relationship on emotions

others. This means that undergraduate students with high family expressiveness tend to control others emotions, and vice versa.

When locus of control was introduced in step 3, there was significant joint prediction of emotion others ($R^2 = .541$, $F = 17.88$, $p < .01$), with all the variables accounting for 54.1% variance. But locus of control accounted for only 13% variance change ($\Delta R^2 = .013$). Independently, the two facets of locus of control predicted emotion others; internal locus of control ($\beta = .189$, $p < .01$) predicted emotion others positively while external locus of control negatively predict emotion others ($\beta = -.215$, $p < .01$). However, correlation ($r = -.40$) showed a significantly negative relationship between internal locus of control and emotion others while external locus of control positively correlate with emotion others ($r = .17$).

In the hierarchical regression involving emotion own facet of emotional intelligence, the demographic variables had no significant joint and independent influence on emotion own. When family environment variables were introduced (in step 2), there was significant joint prediction accounting for 11.7% variance ($R^2 = .117$, $F = 3.36$, $p < .05$). Also, family cohesion and expressiveness positively predicted emotions own ($\beta = .774$, $p < .01$) and ($\beta = .164$, $p < .01$). This implies that the more family environment is cohesive and expressive, the higher the tendency for an undergraduate student to control his or her own emotions. Correlation analysis showed also showed a positive relationship between family cohesion and emotion own ($r = .24$; $p < .05$) while family environment expressiveness showed no significant relation with emotion own ($r = .13$; $p > .05$). The inclusion of locus of control (step 3) resulted in significant joint prediction ($R^2 = .013$, $F = 6.23$, $p < .01$), accounting for 1.3% variance in emotion own. There was also a significant independent contribution of external locus of control on emotion own ($\beta = .741$, $p < .05$) while internal locus of control did not showed significant independent contribution significant ($\beta = .061$, $p > .05$). Result of regression showed that internal locus of control correlate positively and significantly with

emotion own ($r = .19$; $p < .05$) while external locus of control was not found to control with emotion own ($r = .13$; $p > .05$).

On overall emotional intelligence, the demographic variables of age, sex, religion, ethnicity and level of study jointly predicted emotional intelligence ($R^2 = .065$, $F = 3.27$, $p < .05$), accounting for 6.5% variation of the criterion variable. Age had a significant independent prediction ($\beta = .262$, $p < .05$) with correlation coefficient of ($r = .33$, $p < .01$) indicating a positive relationship. It means that as undergraduate students grow older, their ability to control their own emotions and other people's emotions increases.

In step two, the introduction of the family environment variables produced a joint prediction of 32.6% variance in emotional intelligence ($R^2 = .326$, $F = 8.22$, $p < .01$), which is 26.1% variance change in emotional intelligence ($\Delta R^2 = .261$). The contributions of the family environment variables revealed that family cohesion ($\beta = .054$, $p > .05$) do not contribute to emotional intelligence while expressiveness independently predicted emotional intelligence ($\beta = .204$, $p < .01$). It means that as the level of expressiveness increases, emotional intelligence also increase. Correlation coefficient showed both family cohesion ($r = .33$, $p < .01$) and expressiveness ($r = .24$, $p < .05$) to correlate positively with emotional intelligence

Step three showed that the inclusion of locus of control variable produced a joint influence of 34.5% variance in emotional intelligence ($R^2 = .345$, $F = 7.90$, $p < .01$), which is 1.9% variance change in emotional intelligence ($\Delta R^2 = .019$). Findings revealed that internal locus of control produced a significant but negative influence on emotional intelligence ($\beta = -.181$, $p < .05$) while external control did not predict emotional intelligence ($\beta = .141$, $p > .05$). However, correlation analysis revealed a significant and positive correlation between external locus of control and emotional intelligence ($r = .20$, $p < .05$), internal locus of control also correlated positively and significantly with emotional intelligence ($r = .50$, $p < .05$).

4. Discussion

This study addresses family environment (family cohesion and expressiveness) and locus of control (internal and external) as determinants of emotional intelligence (own emotions and others emotion) among undergraduate students in Benue State.

Two facet of emotional intelligence and the composite score of emotional intelligence were regressed on the two family environment factors and two locus of control factors controlling for the demographic factors. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis conducted revealed that all the predictor variables jointly predicted emotion others, emotion own, and overall emotional intelligence. However, family environment expressiveness and internal locus of control did not predict emotion own while family cohesion and external locus of control did not contributed significantly in predicting emotional intelligence.

Some of the findings are supported by correlations which shows that the relationship between the predictor variables and criterion while others were not support by correlation analysis.

Results of the study disclosed that family environment (family cohesion) influence emotional intelligence (own emotions). This means that the environment in which the family lives has vital effects on undergraduates' own emotional. Emotional intelligence is affected by the sources of the family environment. Social status of the parents, the residence, relations within the family, the number of siblings, socio-economic status (SES), two parents, versus single parents households, divorce, parenting practices and aspirations maternal characteristics, family size, neighbourhood, the relations among the siblings is key emotional intelligence. This finding tallies with the work of Hochschild (2003); Eamon (2005); Biradar (2006); Goleman (2008) who in their separate study found family environment to be determinant of emotional intelligence.

Findings further showed that locus of control influence emotion own, emotion others and over all emotional intelligence. The finding indicated that both internal and external locus of control predicted emotion others while internal locus of control was not found to predict emotion own. This implies that individuals high on both internal and external locus of control have an ability to monitor others' emotions and take charge of others behaviors as well as control others environment. However, internal locus of unlike external locus of control, internal locus of control was not found to influence one's own emotions and was not found to influence over all emotional intelligence.

In related development, family cohesion, expressiveness, internal and external locus of control combined to produce significant influence on emotion others, emotion own and over all emotional intelligence. This means that an individual's degree of commitment, help, and support of family members provide for one another as well as an individual's control of events determine his or her ability to control other peoples' emotions, his or her own emotions and the overall emotional intelligence.

4.1 Implication of the Study

Given that individuals differed from one another in their emotional intelligence, this study revealed the influence of family environment and two dimensions of family environment by finding that family cohesion and expressiveness predicts both emotion others and emotion own while only expressiveness predicted over all emotional intelligence. It is encouraged, therefore for parents should provide their children conducive family environment that will enhance their ability to control their own emotions and others emotions.

Emotional intelligence develops over time and can be improved through training and family environment. It is implied that parents need to train and also provide the right family environment for their children so as to enable them control their own emotion and others emotion. This is because individuals who are high in emotional intelligence spontaneously

feel more positive emotions. Undergraduate students therefore, should be trained to learn how to cope with situations or problems that could emerge from their daily interaction with people and how to develop emotional intelligence to deal or cope with own's emotion and other emotion.

4.2 Conclusion

From the analysis of data collected and interpretation of results, the study concluded that family environment (domains of family cohesion and expressiveness) and locus of control (internal and external) statistically and significantly determine emotion others, own emotions and overall emotional intelligence.

4.3 Recommendation

Premised on the findings of the study, couple with the fact that family environment cannot be separated from the emotional development of an individual; a number recommendations were suggested.

- i. Social status of the parents like educational level, occupational status and professions of the parents as well as the quality of the residence, working conditions of the parents and relations of the siblings need to be taking into consideration within the family so as to ensure the development of emotional intelligence of undergraduates.
- ii. Government and policy makers alike, on their part, need to turn to family environment-friendly-policies in order to boost the effect of family environment on emotional intelligence. Thus, such effect will bring about development of emotional intelligence.

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