Influence of Emotional Intelligence, Sense of Coherence and Self-Concept on Attitudes towards Help-Seeking Behaviour among Secondary School Adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis

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Abstract
The study investigated emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept as predictors of attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour among adolescents in Ibadan metropolis. The study adopted a descriptive research design for the purpose of the study. Two hundred secondary school adolescents with their age range 10 - 22 years and mean age 16.0 were randomly selected for the study. Some research instrument consisting of demographic information, emotional intelligence, sense of coherence, self-concept and attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour scales were used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that there was significant relationship between each of emotional intelligence, sense of coherence, self-concept and attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour. Self-concept (β = 0.517, p<0.05), sense of coherence (β = 0.337, p<0.05) and emotional intelligence (β = -0.174, p<0.05) had significant contribution to attitude towards help-seeking behaviour. The results further revealed that 58.6% (Adj R² =0.586) of the variance in the students attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour was accounted for by the independent variables. Based on these findings, it was recommended that parents should play their guidance roles in ensuring that adolescents put on positive attitudes towards help-seeking. Professional counsellors should identify adolescents who are maladjusted and mount intervention strategies to assist them.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Sense of coherence, Self-concept and Attitude towards help-seeking behaviour.

Introduction
Adolescent is widely defined as time in life when the developing individual attains the skills and attributes necessary to become productive and reproductive adult. Nearly all cultures recognize a phase in life when society acknowledges these emerging capacities of young people. Help-seeking behaviours of young people are fundamental to their mental health and well-being. Help-seeking is a form of coping that relies on other people, and is therefore often based on social relationships and interpersonal skills.

In the Western Australian Child Health Survey, only 2% of the 4 – 16 year old with mental health problems had been in contact with mental health services in a 6 month period (Zubrick, Silburn, & Garton, 1995). Similarly, the child and
adolescent component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing revealed that only 29% of children and adolescents with a mental health problem had been in contact with a professional service of any type in a 12-month period, and this included health, mental health and educational services (Bayer & Peay, 1997).

Several major problems have plagued the attitude towards help-seeking behaviour of adolescents. One has been the lack of agreement or consistency in the measurement of attitude towards help-seeking behaviour. Another has been the lack of a unifying theory. Consequently, research has uncovered diverse findings that are often inconsistent and, at times, contradictory. Research on barriers to help-seeking behaviour has underlined the role of self-esteem (Berge & Ranney, 2005) as a central factor affecting attitude towards help-seeking.

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. Emotional intelligence is the ability to acknowledge, understand and regulate one’s own and other people’s emotions, distinguish among them and use this information to guide one’s thoughts and action (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). The benefits of emotional intelligence have been demonstrated in different context of daily life and in professional activities. Emotionally intelligent people display better physical and mental health, higher levels of well-being and vital satisfaction, less risk conducts, such as drugs use, and better interpersonal and social relations in the professional and personal contexts (Sartorius, 2007).

Another factor that can be used to assess attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour of an adolescent is sense of coherence. The concept of sense of coherence (SOC) was asserted by Aaron Autonovsky in 1979 to explain why some people became ill under stress and others stayed healthy. It arose from the salutogenic approach, that is, the search for the origins of health rather than the causes of disease. According to Antonovsky (1987, 1991), sense of coherence is a pervasive, dynamic, and enduring feeling of confidence that life and the surrounding environment are predictable. It consists of three components: comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. Like the construct of efficacy expectancy and outcome expectancy in self-efficacy theory and autonomy, competence and relatedness construct in SDT (Self determination theory), a sense of coherence can motivate individual to use personal resources (e.g. articulating and planning) to restore equilibrium or reach their optimal functioning. For instance, when a student encounters psychological, social, and contextual problems, having a higher sense of coherence could ignite a feeling of confidence that seeking professional psychological help will work out. It seems that a higher sense of coherence could be related to favourable attitude towards seeking professional psychological help.
Thus sense of coherence should be studied for its relationship with adaptive behaviour such as attitude towards seeking psychological services.

Furthermore, self-concept can also be used to assess attitude towards help-seeking behaviour in adolescents. “Self-concept could be seen as individual’s perception or image of his/her abilities and uniqueness. At first, one’s self-concept is very general and changeable. As we grow older, these self-perceptions become much organised, detailed, and specific.” (Wener, Aviv & Barak, 2008). “A self-concept is a collection of beliefs about one’s own nature, unique qualities, and typical behaviour. Your self-concept is your mental picture of yourself. It is a collection of self perceptions (Wrigley, Jackson, Judd & Komiti, 2005). This study on influence of emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept on attitude towards help-seeking behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis is carried out to test the effects of the aforementioned independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) on help-seeking behaviours of adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

Review of Related Studies

Emotional Intelligence and Attitude towards Help-seeking Behaviour

In some empirical studies on the relationship between emotional intelligence and help-seeking behaviour, Druskat, Sala, and Mount (2006) found that adolescents who were low in emotional awareness were less likely to seek help from informal sources and more likely to report that they would not seek help from anyone. A further study by Druskat, Sala, and Mount (2006) reported the same findings, but also that young people lacking in emotional competence were also less likely to seek help from formal or professional sources.

Studies have shown that people lacking in emotional competence may find it more difficult to ask for help, and have less readily available sources of help (Rickwood, 2005). In addition people low in emotional competence may have had less successful help-seeking experiences in the past, and may be less inclined to seek help again (Ciarrochi & Godsell, 2006).

Sense of Coherence and Attitude towards Help-seeking Behaviour

According to Antonovsky (1987, 1991), sense of coherence is a pervasive, dynamic, and enduring feeling of confidence that life and the surrounding environment are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can be reasonably expected. It consists of three components — comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. Like the constructs of efficacy expectancy and outcome expectancy in self-efficacy theory, and autonomy, competence, and relatedness constructs in SDT, a sense of coherence can motivate individuals to use personal resources (e.g. articulating and planning) to restore
equilibrium or reach their optimal functioning. For instance, when a student encounters psychological, social, and contextual problems, having a higher sense of coherence could ignite a feeling of confidence that seeking professional psychological help will work out.

To Schieman and Turner (1998), having a firm sense of coherence is associated with numerous positive health practices and outcomes (e.g. proactive help-seeking behaviour, preventive health care, and less overall incidence of illness). This means that high levels of personal growth initiative should drive people towards a wide range of well-being and enhancement strategies. A student with high levels of personal growth initiative should be able to do a critical appraisal of his/her past, present, and future experiences as a benchmark for addressing personal growth and development needs.

**Self-concept and Attitude towards Help-seeking Behaviour**

Empirical studies on the relationship between self-concept and attitude towards help-seeking behaviour was offered by Fallon, and Bowles (2001). Most of these studies postulated that seeking of help and the utilization of support systems by adolescents have a buffering effect on reactions to stress, resulting in better adjustment and less emotional and behavioural problems (Fallon & Bowles, 2001).

Self-esteem related conceptions such as self-concept have been shown to have an important influence on the willingness or unwillingness to seek help (Nelson-Le Gall, 1986). Level of self-esteem or self-concept has been viewed as a personality characteristic that moderates the individual’s sensitivity to the self-threatening situation of admitting inadequacy to self and others. By making a request for help, individuals acknowledge their inability to cope with a failure and lower their sense of self-esteem.

In explaining the roles of self-esteem and self-concept in help-seeking behaviour, vulnerability and consistency have been implicated. According to Nelson-Le Gall (1986), individuals with low self-esteem or self-concept are expected to seek help less than are high self-esteem or self-concept individuals. This is because low self-esteem or self-concept individuals have few positive self-cognitions, they are more vulnerable to self-threatening information and avoid the self-threatening situations of seeking help more than high self-esteem.

In explaining the role of self-esteem or self-concept in help-seeking behaviour using the consistency hypothesis, high self-esteem or self-concept is expected to be associated with less help-seeking. This prediction suggests that it is the inconsistency of incoming self-related information with existing self-cognitions that is threatening to the self. According this proposition, high self-esteem or self-concept individuals with many positive self-cognitions are likely to perceive more
self-threat than low self-esteem or self-concept individuals and as such less likely to seek help (Nelson-Le Gall 1986).

Wei (1999) found that secondary school students who had higher academic self-concepts reported a higher likelihood of seeking help on encountering academic problems. Similarly, Al-Darmaki (2003) and Nadler, Maler and Friedman (1984) reported in their studies that self-esteem had significant correlation with attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help. In a study, Wang (2013) found that personal self-esteem predicted help-seeking attitude of U.S.-born and Mainland-born. In a recent study, Fitzgerald, Dolan and Evans (2015) reported that students with high self-concept scores had less barriers in seeking help for psychological problems.

Research Questions

i. What pattern of relationship exists between the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) and dependent variable (attitude towards help-seeking behaviour)

ii. What is the combined effect of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) on attitude towards help-seeking behaviour?

iii. What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) to attitude towards help-seeking behaviour?

Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive research design was used for the study. This design was used because the research did not manipulate the variables of the study. A careful observation was done by selecting a subset of the population as a representative for the study.

Population

The population for the study comprises of all secondary school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis. The population consists of secondary school adolescents who were willing to participate in the research as no secondary school adolescent was forced to participate in the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study comprises two hundred (200) secondary school adolescents randomly selected through stratified random sampling from four senior secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis. The participants comprise male and females with age range between 10 and 22 above, with rich or poor family
background, who has either sought help before or not and, with varied academic level within the secondary school ranking; participated in the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this collection of data was a set of adopted questionnaire:

*Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS):* Developed by Wong and Law (2002) to test emotional intelligence of undergraduate students trained on emotional intelligence construct, generating items according to the four dimensional definition of EI as put by Davies (1998) i.e. self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others-emotions appraisal (OEA55–8), use of emotion (UOE,9–12) and regulation of emotion (EOE, 12–16). It has 16 items in all with four likert response format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and, Disagree (D). The coefficient alpha for the subscales were 0.69, 0.84, 0.78 and 0.72 respectively.

*The Sense of Coherence Scale (SOCS):* The sense of coherence scale was developed by Antonousky (2005) with 12 items to examine the sense of coherence in some set of adolescents in Australia. It has three subscales and a four likert scale format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and, Disagree (D). It has content validity, and a Crombach alpha of 0.78 was found.

*Personal Self-concept Scale (PSCS):* Derived from [http://samplequestionnaireofselfconcept](http://samplequestionnaireofselfconcept). It has 22 items with four likert scale response format and, it has four subscales of self-fulfilment (SF), Autonomy (AU), emotional Adjustment ESC) and Honesty (HON). Two studies were carried out using this experimental questionnaire. When administered to 506 subsets aged between 12 and 36 the questionnaire was found to have a crombach’s alpha reliability index of 0.85.

*Attitude toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS):* It was developed by Fischer & Farroma (1995). It has 10 items scale which is a revision of the original 29 itemsATSPPHHS (Fischer & Turner, 1979). Items are answered on a 4-point likert scale from “Disagree” to “Agree.” Total score ranges from 8 to 32 lower and highest respectively. Its internal consistency was 0.84 and test-retest reliability was 0.80.

Data Analysis

The data collected from questionnaire administration was analyzed using percentage count statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) and regression statistics.
Results
Research Question 1:-
What patterns of relationship exist between the independent variables (emotional Intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) and dependent variable (Attitude towards help seeking behaviour)?

Table 1: Correlation between emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept on Attitude towards help seeking behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards help seeking</td>
<td>28.91</td>
<td>4.408</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional intelligence,</td>
<td>41.78</td>
<td>2.816</td>
<td>-.417**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of coherence</td>
<td>37.48</td>
<td>3.065</td>
<td>.458**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-concept</td>
<td>60.59</td>
<td>7.649</td>
<td>.706**</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation Significant at p<0.05 level.

The result on the patterns of relationship existing between the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) and dependent variable (Attitude towards help seeking behaviour) was to be significant. Table 5 revealed (r) that, emotional intelligence (r = 0.417, p<0.05), sense of coherence (r = 0.458, p<0.05), and self-concept (r = 0.706, p<0.05), were correlated with attitude towards help seeking behaviour. The positive relationships were found with sense of coherence and self-concept while negative relationship was found in emotional intelligence.

Research Question 2:-
What is the combined effect of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) to dependent variable (Attitude towards help seeking behaviour)?
Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis of the combined prediction of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>2.83654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary Regression Anova**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>2291.374</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>763.791</td>
<td>94.929</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1577/006</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>8.046</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3868.380</td>
<td>199</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 showed that there is combined effect of the independent variables emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept on the dependent variable (Attitude towards help seeking behaviour). That is, Attitude towards help seeking behaviour correlated positively with the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept). The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.770 and a multiple R-square of 0.592. It was observed that 58.6% (Adj. R²=0.586) of the variance in the students attitude towards help seeking behaviour was accounted for, by the independent variables, when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at p<0.05 using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom (df = 3/196). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 94.929 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint - contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variables was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research Questions 3:

What is the relative contribution effect of each of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) to dependent variable (Attitude towards help seeking behaviour)?
Table 3: Relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variables (Test of significance of the regression coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients (B)</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.035</td>
<td>4.931</td>
<td>-.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional intelligence</td>
<td>-.272</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>-.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sense of coherence</td>
<td>.485</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-concept</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 reveals that there was a relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The correlation coefficients of emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept have relationship with the Attitude towards help seeking behaviour. The effects of emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept was actually the determinant of the reinforcement of these independent variables. Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the explanation of the dependent variables, self-concept (B= 0.517, t= 8.583, p< 0.05) is the most potent contributor to the prediction followed by sense of coherence (B = 0.337, t= 6.665, p< 0.05), while emotional intelligence has a negative contribution to the prediction at (B = -.174, t=-2.979, p<0.05), in that order.

Discussion

Research Question One:

What pattern of relationship exists between the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) and dependent variable (attitude towards help-seeking behaviour)?

In response to the research question on pattern of relationship that exist between the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) and dependent variable (attitude towards help-seeking behaviour), the result from the findings revealed that emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept has correlation with attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour. Result revealed, based on pattern of relationship that, emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept have significant correlations with attitude towards help-seeking behaviour. This implies that self-concept and sense of coherence potently correlated with attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour on adolescents.
The outcome of this result is in parallel with Jorm, (2000) when they stated that, seeking and receiving help from mental health professionals can assist in the reduction of distressing psychological symptoms, yet few who experience significant psychological distress seek professional help (Jorm, 2000). Jorm, Griffiths, Christensen, Korten, Parslow & Rodgers (2003), in a survey of over 10,600 persons found that while more than one in five adults meet the criteria for mental health disorder (62%) of persons with a mental disorder did not seek any professional help for mental health problems while, Ciarrochi, Chan and Caputi (2000) stated that people with high emotional competence tend to have more sources of social support from extended family and friends and thus have more opportunities for seeking help.

**Research Question Two:**

What is the combined effect of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) and dependent variable (attitude towards help-seeking behaviour)?

In response to question on the combined effects of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) and dependent variable (attitude towards help-seeking behaviour), the result also revealed that there is a combined effect of the independent variables; emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept on the dependent variable: attitude toward help-seeking behaviour. The outcome of this study is in line with the work of Jorm (2000) stating that decades of psychotherapy research have revealed that psychological treatments are effective for broad range of concerns while the low 58.6% differences is in line with Kahn, Achter, & Shambaugh, (2001) stating that, the percentage of those with mental health concern who actually seek help from a counsellor or mental health professional is noticeably smaller i.e. 11% particularly for those who struggle with problems that do not meet diagnosable criteria while Kahn, Achter, & Shambaugh, (2001) identified the desire to avoid discussing distressing or personal information (Jorm, 2000) and, the desire to avoid experiencing painful feelings and (Jorm, 2000) cited perception of being flawless because of a personal or physical characteristics that is regardless socially unacceptable; as a stigma of seeking psychological help.

**Research Question Three:**

What is the relative contribution effect of each of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) dependent variable (attitude towards help-seeking behaviour)?

In response to the contributing effect of each of the independent variables (emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept) to dependent variable....
(attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour), the result of the findings revealed that, there was a relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable. This implies that sense of coherence and self-concept are seen as potent contribution to attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour while emotional intelligence had a negative contribution all through.

This high contribution from sense of coherence is in line with the research outcome of Kolo (1994) when he stated that, Nigerian students prefer seeking help for their problems ranging from psychological (emotional, personal growth and personal development), social (interpersonal relation, lack of social skill, campus unrests, and cultism) and contextual (time management, decision-making, academic concerns and financial) from informal sources (e.g. spiritual houses, immediate family members, friends, mentors, and other significant others), other than professionals. This outcome negotiates the work of Corrigan (2004) when he stated that help-seeking is often harmful in that, it leads to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination of individuals who seek psychological care while Mathew (2003) buttressed Corrigan by quoting hypothesis of researchers that, “people hide psychological concerns and avoid treatment to limit the harmful consequences associated with public stigma.” This implies that sense of coherence and self-concept are triggered in individuals to seek help but, the needed emotional intelligence is not enough to visit the right source for help.

**Conclusion**

The research work has established that emotional intelligence sense of coherence and self-concept were correlated with attitude towards help-seeking behaviour. Inverse relationship was found in emotional intelligence while a positive significant relationship was found with sense of coherence and self-concept on attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour of adolescents. That is, sense of coherence and self-concept of adolescents plays active role on their attitude towards help-seeking behaviour while their emotional intelligence is inactive when they put-up such attitudes. Therefore, emotional intelligence contributed less than other variables adolescents in Ibadan metropolis.

**Implications of the Findings**

This study examined the influence of emotional intelligence, sense of coherence and self-concept on attitudes towards help-seeking behaviour among secondary school adolescents in Ibadan metropolis, Ibadan, Nigeria and The result of the study provides practical implications for the society at large. Especially the parents, teachers, psychologist/professional counsellors who are directly involved at observing and shaping behaviours.
The results of this study suggest important practical implications for stakeholders in formal and informal education processes especially in the area of educational guidance and counselling. Due to the inadequate counselling services in Nigeria, especially with recent events of acting on impulse by adolescents which makes them seek help from unapproved sources therefore, parents are advice to nurture from childhood their intelligence to be wise not acting on impulse whenever they need help.

**Recommendations**

In order to improve adolescents’ attitude towards help-seeking behaviour, the following suggestions are made as possible strategies based on outcome of the study.

The students should be guided and taught on how to put on positive attitude towards seeking psychological help as this would enable them to be potent and positive attitudinally toward seeking and receiving psychological help from others and professional bodies.

The teachers should watch carefully students who lack positive attitude towards seeking psychological help by assisting them in the area of guidance and calling of their attention toward putting-on positive attitude as this will really help them.

Parents should take up shield and buckler at inculcating positive attitudes in their words i.e. charity begins at home. Parents should guide their wards, train from childhood to possess positive attitude as this would help them in a lot of ways when they grow up as adults especially, when it comes to seeking psychological help from a professional; even, such people could be given preferential treatment above those who lack positive attitudes.

Professional counsellors/psychologists should intensify their efforts at identifying and ameliorating the trend in adolescents positive attitudes attainment. It is common to adolescents to bully and escalate a peaceful situation therefore, such adolescents should be identified and placed on a therapy that will assist at adjusting them to the normal since parents alone cannot handle it.

**Reference**


