

Trait Emotional Intelligence and Mathematics Achievements among Undergraduates in Higher Learning Institution of Sarawak.

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence appears to be a significant influencing factor in academic achievements. This study aims to identify the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and mathematics achievements (a relatively sparse research areas of academic achievements) among undergraduates in higher learning institution of Sarawak. 100 respondents from a higher-level institution of Sarawak participated in this study. Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue) is used to measure the trait emotional intelligence of the undergraduates. The result was analysed using descriptive analysis and inferential analysis, namely two-way ANOVA and Pearson's correlation. Two-way ANOVA was used to test if there is significant difference in demographic attributes (gender and place of residence) towards maths achievements and trait emotional intelligence of the undergraduates. Pearson Correlation was used to test the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and mathematics achievements of the undergraduates. Generally, this study found that there is no significant difference for factors related to demographic attributes (gender and place of residence) against maths achievements and trait emotional intelligence of the undergraduates. Meanwhile, a relationship was found between trait emotional intelligence and mathematics achievements among undergraduates in higher learning institution in Sarawak. The outcome of the study appears to suggest that trait emotional intelligence can help undergraduates to understand themselves more and to control and manage their emotions and feelings and have better relationship with their surroundings. And this could positively impact on their maths achievements.

Keywords: trait emotional intelligence, mathematics achievements, undergraduates

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INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, students face different kinds of challenges in life especially in overcoming academic challenges (Wu, Garza, and Guzman, 2015). Academic difficulties and achievements among students are topics that receive persistent attention especially in recent years. However, society usually pays less attention to the influence of affective dimensions in helping students to cope with academic difficulties and achievement problems. According to a study in Finland, one of the important factors that caused stress and depression among students was academic performance (Essel & Owusu, 2017), resulting in students entertaining suicidal ideations and thoughts (Pillay, 2017). Not surprisingly then, suicidal tendencies among students appeared to be on the rise (Pillay, 2017), and youth suicides appeared to be a serious concern in many countries (Durisch, n.d.).

Mathematics anxiety among students is a common reported problem among students both in foreign and local contexts (Beilock & Maloney, 2015; Khairiyah, Ismail & Yusof, 2016). There were also several suicide cases over the past years seemingly related to poor performance in mathematics (Goh Yi Wen, 2018). However, research studies on factors that lead to suicidal stress and depressions among youth due to poor maths performance is relatively scarce. Cummins (2014) reasoned, in this regard, that emotional intelligence could be an important influencing factor in explaining youth suicide and their involvement in arrays of other social problems. Hence, it was argued that emotional intelligence could perhaps be an effective intervention tool for improved maths performances and a good antidote to academic stress and difficulties leading to suicide ideations and attempts (Cha, Christine & Marin, 2009; Aradilla-Herrero, Tomás-Sábado, & Gómez-Benito 2013). Thus, apart from the traditional IQ, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is seen by researchers to possess the ability to explain performance outcomes (Gardner, 1983). In sum, mathematics anxiety could potentially be a factor that could cause unnecessary stress and difficulties to students and hence affecting academic performance and in turn developed into anxiety or depression problems which could lead to suicidal ideations. So, it is crucial to investigate if emotional intelligence is predictive of mathematical performances as incompetent EI, as many had argued, is likely to result in students developing anxiety and depression problems linking to suicidal ideations