



## Research Article

# Influence of Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control on Academic Achievement of Underachieving High Ability Students

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### Abstract

Underachievement among high ability or gifted students has remained a challenge to educators. Therefore, strategies to combat it have been evolving. Meanwhile instructional strategies seem not effective because of some hidden damage in the personality of the students. This study is therefore motivated to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) and locus of control (LC) on academic achievement of underachieving high ability students in Ibadan, Nigeria. The sample for the study consists of 72 underachieving high ability students purposively selected from 12 schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. Cognitive Ability Test, modified Schutte's (1998) Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) and Rotter's (2001) Locus of Control Scale (RLCS), and the school academic record were used for the data collection. Data collected were analyzed using, t-test and multiple regression analysis. Results showed that the LC and EI of the respondents are significantly low. Again, there is a very strong influence of EI and LC on academic achievement of the participants. A significant difference also exist between male and female students in their locus of control ( $t=2.15$ ,  $p<.05$ ) with female participants showing better locus of internal control. The study also revealed that LC ( $\beta = .52$ ) has more influence than emotional intelligence ( $\beta = .46$ ) in predicting academic achievement and that the two variables have high positive correlation ( $R = .636$ ) and very strong significant composite effect ( $F(2,70) = 6.53$  and  $p<.05$ ) on academic achievement. Again LC and EI account for 40.4% (Multiple  $R^2 = .404$ ) of the total variance of the academic achievement. Therefore, it is recommended that educators and parents should develop the emotional intelligence and internal locus of control strongly and not only the cognition domain for optimum achievement of high ability students.

### Keywords

locus of control, emotional intelligence, academic achievement, high ability students

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## **Introduction**

The realization of the possibility of being a high ability or gifted and experience academic underachievement is no more a mirage in the society because many literature has provided proofs. Academic underachievement is a discrepancy between what a person is capable of achieving and the actual achievement. It is a menace that if not reversed would result into brain drain which has adverse consequences on the nation's development. The realization of gifted underachievement has put to task many professionals in the field of gifted education and educational psychology to find out ways of reversing the menace. Most instructional strategies developed have been undermined by some hidden traits of the gifted students. Major among these hidden traits are locus of control and emotional disposition. The emotion and locus of control are critical issues that have become a major area of concern to 21st century education researchers. The two constructs have led to the plethora of literature in the field of educational psychology (Adeyemo & Ogunyemi, 2007; Ibrahim, 2010). The constructs have been extensively researched and reviewed for most children but not so well for children with special needs and particularly for those who are gifted and talented. The assumption many a time is that the gifted child has better emotion and control of his focus as it is being constantly mention in their characteristics. Little however, did most teachers know that a gifted child can experience the worst emotion and lose control in academic endeavour. This ignorance was perceived to contribute to the observed persistence dwindling academic performance and underachievement of many gifted children.

Emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to perceive, understand and manage one's feelings relative to that of others positively. It requires adjusting psychologically in relating with other people. Emotional intelligence could be described as an important factor that determines success and psychological wellbeing of a child. A person who has high emotional intelligence maintains order and stability of life in such a way that he experiences less negative events in his life (Omoniyi & Adelowo, 2014) and have satisfied emotional needs including the need to be valued, loved and demonstrate autonomy (Porter, 2005). Most times however, high ability students are usually criticized for unacceptable behaviour in the classroom by teachers and peers and sometimes in the family because of their reactions to issues which are not usually in conformity with their expectation. As a result, high ability students with a high cognitive potential feel psychologically unsafe in schools and perhaps at home. They develop emotional stress as a result of trying to please their school mates and teachers or rather in defending their behaviour (Dada, 2015). The emotional stress is considered unhealthy for good performance in school work. Therefore, it behooves a child with high ability whose reasoning and

ability differs from that of the general class to develop coping strategy to save him from further complication particularly in academic achievement.

Locus of control is a theory in personality psychology referring to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. The understanding of this concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954 and has since become a significant aspect of personality studies. The locus of control of a person is conceptualized as either internal or external. Those who believe that their own behaviours determine the positive reinforcement they receive and that they have control over their own lives are said to have internal locus of control. Individuals with external locus of control are those who believe that the result they receive are due to fate, luck, or other external circumstances. Such individuals attribute their circumstances to environmental factors.

The underachievement of high ability students are however suspected on the confusion about the gifted perception of their locus of control. They are confused of on whether they are truly gifted or not and why they are not doing well and accepted by others if giftedness truly means something good. So, if a high ability student does not have high internal locus of control, such a child is seriously at a high risk poor learning and achievement will be grossly undermined. This explains why effort in most inclusive classroom has been channeled on cognitive development with little achievement and particularly for high ability students whose underachievement is hidden to regular teachers in school. Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham (2010), however, reported that cognitive abilities alone are not sufficient to account for individual academic success. Thus, the study was motivated and considered it a useful knowledge search to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence and locus of control on academic achievement of underachieving gifted students.

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are tested in the study at .05 level of significance.

- The locus of internal control and emotional intelligence relative to academic achievement of the underachieving high ability student are not significantly poor
- There is no significant difference in the locus of internal control and emotional intelligence between male and female underachieving high ability students.
- There is no significant differential and joint influence of locus of internal control and emotional intelligence on academic achievement of underachieving high ability students.

**Methodology**

An expo facto design was adopted for this study. A pluralistic screening approach was used in selecting seventy-two (72) underachieving high ability students from 12 high ranking secondary schools in Ibadan. Students with high scores in ability test who are nominated by the teachers but are not doing so well in the school aggregate scores were selected purposively. The selection was based on discrepancy between actual school performance and ability performance of the nominated students. A modified Rotter’s (2001) Locus of Control Scale (RLCS), Schutte (1998) Emotional Intelligence Scale (SEIS) which were revalidated to ascertain its reliability and Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) were used for data collection. A test retest method was used to obtain a reliability estimate of 0.74, .82 and .78 for RLCS, SEIS and CAT respectively. The instrument were administered to the participants after due permission from the schools’ authority and the parents’ consent. Data collected were analyzed using t-test and multiple regression analysis.

**Results and Discussion**

The results of the data analysis are presented according to the hypothesis and discussion of the findings followed thereafter.

Hypothesis 1: The locus of internal control and emotional intelligence relative to academic achievement of the underachieving high ability student are not significantly poor

**Table 1**

*Population T-Test Analysis Of Locus Of Internal Control (Test Value 10) And Emotional Intelligence (Test Value 22.5) Of Underachieving High Ability Students*

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	Df	p-value
Locus of Internal Control	72	16.65	.65348	86.38	71	.000
Emotional Intelligence	72	21.34	1.35480	7.220	71	.000

The result shown in table 1 revealed that the mean value of the sample distribution for internal locus of control is 16.65 which indicate that the responses of the sample is far higher than the population mean set at 10.00. This implies that the sample tends towards external locus of control than the internal locus of control. This is justifies by the interpretation of the scale of the instrument that the higher the score on the scale the more external the locus of control. Therefore, at t= 86.38 and df= 71, p<.05, this implies that the stated hypothesis is rejected. Hence, the internal locus of control is significantly poor for the sample. In the same vein, the emotional intelligence of the sample is significantly poor. This is revealed by the mean value of

the sample 21.34 being lower than the population mean of 22.5 resulting to t-value of -7.22 and at  $df= 71$ ,  $p<.05$ . This implies that the hypothesis is rejected, thus the emotional intelligence of the sample relative to academic is significantly poor.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the locus of internal control and emotional intelligence between male and female underachieving high ability students.

**Table 2**

Independent t-test analysis of gender differences on locus of internal control and emotional intelligence of underachieving high ability students

Variable	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	Df	p-value
Locus of internal Control	Female	27 (37.5%)	16.4 4	.506	- 2.15	7 0	.035 *
	Male	45 (62.5%)	16.7 7	.703			
Emotional Intelligence	Female	27 (37.5%)	21.0 4	.706	- 1.52	7 0	.133
	Male	45 (62.5%)	21.5 3	1.60 3			

\*= significance

From the results presented in table 2, there are more males 62.5% than female 37.5% who are underachieving high ability students. The results with internal locus of control shows a gender difference with  $t= 2.15$ , and at  $df= 70$ ,  $p<.05$  meaning that the stated hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant gender difference in the locus of internal control among underachieving high ability students. The mean value of male sample is a little higher than that of the female. This indicates that the female have a better internal locus of control than male in the study sample. Again, the emotional intelligence of the sample with respect to gender gives a  $t= -1.52$ , and at  $df= 70$ ,  $p>.05$ . This result indicates that the null hypothesis stated is upheld. Therefore the finding with respect to this result is that there is no significant gender difference in the emotional intelligence of the sample.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant differential and joint influence of locus of internal control and emotional intelligence on academic achievement of underachieving high ability students.

**Table 3**

ANOVA From The Multiple Regression Analysis Of Locus Of Internal Control And Emotional Intelligence On Academic Achievement Of Underachieving High Ability Students

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	87.23	2	43.62	6.53	.000*
Residual	468.72	69	6.69		
Total	555.95	71			

Multiple R = 0.636, Multiple R<sup>2</sup> = 0.404, Standard Error Estimate= 1.549

**Table 4**

*Beta Coefficient From The Multiple Regression Analysis Of Locus Of Control And Emotional Intelligence On Academic Achievement Of Underachieving High Ability Students*

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	P
	B	SEB	Beta		
Emotional Intelligence	.46	.37	.46	12.30	<.05*
Locus of Control	-1.19	.29	-.52	10.07	<.05*

Table 3 and 4 are the results obtained with respect to hypothesis 3. Table 3 revealed that if the combined effect of locus of control and emotional intelligence is regressed on the academic achievement of the sample under study, an F-value of 6.53 was obtained and at df of 2 and 69 the  $p < .05$ . This implies that the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This is interpreted that the joint effect of locus of control and emotional intelligence significantly influence academic achievement of the sample. Again, the  $R = .636$  indicates a strong relationship among the variables and the joint effect of locus of control and emotional intelligence account for 40.4% ( $R^2 = .404$ ) of the total variation of the academic achievement of the sample. Table 4 also showed the differential influence of each of locus of control and emotional intelligence. Both variables differentially influence academic achievement of the sample significantly ( $t = 12.30$ ;  $p < .05$  and  $t = 10.07$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Meanwhile, locus of control ( $\beta = -.52$ ) has a higher weight influence than emotional intelligence ( $\beta = .46$ ).

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of the multiple regression analysis revealed that emotional intelligence and locus of control either collectively or separately are potent predictors of academic achievement of high ability students. These findings lend credence to the fact that a student understands of self in terms of strengths and weaknesses (emotional intelligence) and the orientation about what brings about academic outcome, achievement and success (locus of control) can contribute in no small measure to a student academic achievement. It was also found that female high

ability students are less emotionally intelligent than male students but have better locus of control than the male students.

Meanwhile, on a general note, a good reason for underachievement revealed in this study is traceable to poor locus of internal control and emotional intelligence. Ford and Thomas (2009) had earlier established in their research that when students attribute their success to luck, they tend to develop poor attitude towards their studies, the result in poor academic achievement. Emotional intelligence and locus of control are therefore strong predictors of students development academically because the influence attitude towards learning and achievement. This finding is in line with the separate findings of Adeyemo and Ogunyemi (2007) and Salami (2004) who found that emotional intelligence correlates positively with students' academic achievement. The findings of gender difference in locus of control however contradict that of Gildea (2002) who reported that there is no significant difference in male and female locus of control and emotional intelligence.

The fact that emotional intelligence correlates positively and significantly with academic achievement is a pointer to the fact that a student's ability to monitor and understand, and control his/her emotions relative to that of others is one of the traits needed for academic success. The findings of this study also revealed that good stable emotion is necessary not only for adequate concentration on academic work but also for ultimate academic achievement. These findings lend credence to the work of Nazir and Masrur (2010) who reported that effective learning takes place when students have an understanding of how to learn, and this understanding requires emotional intelligence. Many researches have supported a strong relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Some supported and reinforced the findings of this study through empirical evidence linking emotional intelligence with students' behaviour and academic success (Salami, 2004; Salami & Ogundokun, 2009; Tagliavia, Tripton, Giannetti & Mattei, 2006; Wong, Wong & Chau, 2002). Students who had high emotional intelligence i.e. could perceive and understand their own emotions and emotions of others and could manage their emotional behaviour performed well in their academic work and developed more positive attitude toward learning.

Locus of control was also found to correlate with students' academic achievement. The orientation that academic success is dependent on hard work, and good study habit and the like can help a student to prepare adequately for academic challenges. On the other hand, students who attribute academic success to luck may not have the urge to do the necessary things that are required for optimum potential achievement. This leads to low academic achievement or general life underachievement. This finding corroborate the separate findings of Vela (2003) and Nelson, Low and Vela (2004) who found that locus of control determines students

perception of their academic outcome and that these perception affects their commitment, seriousness and diligence to academic tasks.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demands a paradigm shift from the long existing belief and assumption that gifted students have no problem with emotion and have positive locus of control, and that academic performance and school achievement depend largely on cognitive intelligence. The findings in this study have also shown that emotional intelligence and locus of control of high ability students need to be given adequate attention in order to enhance their academic achievement.

## Recommendations

Owing to the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made

- Government should train regular and special needs education teachers and educational psychologist on effective strategies that are capable of reversing underachievement resulting from poor locus of control and emotional disposition for all students and particularly the gifted ones.
- Educators should not assume on the locus of control and emotional intelligence of high ability students but should deliberately assesses and develop the constructs in them for optimum impact on academic achievement.
- Schools should collaborate with parents/guardians and the high ability students on the best practices of reinforcing internal locus of control and emotional management of high ability students.

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