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Comparative Study of Part-Time and Full-Time Students' Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Well-Being and Life Satisfaction in the Era of New Technology

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Abstract

Many students who enroll in distance learning programs claimed that they feel very stressful when completing their assignments, poor performance and difficulties to cope with studies and work. This study compared the part-time distance learning students and the full-time students' emotional intelligence, psychological well-being and life satisfaction. This study employed a survey method involving 67 students. The finding revealed that there was a significant difference in emotional intelligence between the part-time and the full time students. However, there were no significant differences in psychological well-being and life satisfaction between the two groups of students. Implications and recommendations are discussed accordingly.

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Keywords: Psychological well-being; emotional intelligence; life satisfaction; learning environment

1. Introduction

With the rapid growth of technology, educational and learning environment nowadays is not confined in the traditional classroom anymore. Students can now be educated electronically by distance learning method, which means, they can choose to enroll in a distance learning program or e-learning program where they meet their lecturers on the internet without leaving their home. This method of instruction is

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getting more and more popular in many countries around the world. Usually, students who take up this kind of learning methods enroll as part-time students rather than full-time students. Students who are working full-time prefer this e-learning method than the traditional classroom method because they get to study without quitting their job. However, there are many complaints from the lecturers that the part-time students are having difficulties balancing their studies and their work. It is interesting to note that the academic achievements of these part-time students are quite well. All the same, some lecturers also complain that the full-time students are not serious with their studies, which results to poor grades. This study compares the part-time students and the full-time students' emotional intelligence, psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

Most teaching and assessment in higher education focus on cognitive skills of knowledge understanding rather than on affective outcomes of values, attitudes and behaviors (Shepard, 2007). The affective domain describes the way people react emotionally such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes. (Krathwohl, Bloom, Masia, 1973). Besides, students' motivation to learn and their emotional state whilst learning are also elements of the affective domain (Beard et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, educators have traditionally been reluctant to pursue affective learning outcomes but often program of study simply fail to identify and describe their legitimate aims in these terms (Shepard, 2007). Hence, the constructs of emotional intelligence, psychological well being and life satisfaction which were categories under the affective domains in the learning process have also been neglected. The idea that emotional intelligence (EQ) is an important aspect of well-being and everyday coping has generated a great deal of interest. According to Segal and Smith (2013), "Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to identify, use, understand and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict." Emotional intelligence influences a person's daily life and it can be seen in the way he or she behaves and communicates with others. Goleman (1995) defined EQ by exclusion as any variable feature of personal character not represented by cognitive intelligence. EQ is also defined as an array of emotional and social abilities, competencies, and skills that enable individuals to cope with daily demands and be more effective in their personal and social life (Ayiro, 2009; Bar-On, Tranel, Denburg and Bechara, 2003). A lot of researchers found that EQ is linked to a person's life satisfaction, the quality of interpersonal relationships and success in occupations (Zeidner and Olnick-Shemesh, 2010).

2.1. Emotional intelligence

In accordance to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence or EQ is the ability to motivate oneself whenever there is a downfall in life as well as able to control impulse from reacting in an aggressive manner. Moreover, EQ is also the ability to delay gratification and keep one's mind focus even though one is in a stressful situation. Someone who is emotionally intelligent is said to have the ability to regulate his or her own emotions (Goleman, 1995; Song et al., 2010; Federer, 2011). This is crucial in enhancing emotional and intellectual growth. Federer (2011) added that managing feelings is vital because people need to express their emotions appropriately and effectively which will enable people to work together harmoniously toward their goals. Federer (2011) believed that EQ develops in a human being through experiences and learning. EQ can keep growing in a human being and will continue to develop through life experiences. EQ has also been said to be related to life satisfaction (Gallager and Vella-Brodrick, 2008; Palmer, Donalson and Stough, 2002). Research found that the higher the EQ level

in a person, the higher the level of life satisfaction. In addition to that, EQ has also been associated with social support (Gallager and Vella-Brodrick, 2008). It is believed that positive social support can help strengthen the EQ. Palmer, Donaldson and Stough (2002) agreed to this by stating EQ is related to the quality of interpersonal relationship. Zeidner and Olnick – Shemesh (2010) also believed high EQ may predict greater social engagement with others as well as social emotional success, higher self esteem, greater life satisfaction and psychological well-being. Gallager and Vella-Brodrick (2008) further said that people with a high level of EQ have the ability to understand their emotion, which will give positive affect to them.

In accordance to Song, Huang, Peng, Law, Wong and Chen (2010), EQ can predict students' academic performance as well as their communication with their friends. Experts believed that a high EQ level can make students become successful in school as well as successful in their career later on in their life. Seal, Naumann, Scott, Royce- Davis (2010) found students who can build good relationships with others and are able to understand themselves and the world around them are likely to have a positive outcome in school work and life. In addition to that, Petrides, Frederickson and Furham (2004) also found that students with high level of EQ rarely get expelled from schools. This is probably because they can control their emotions from being involved in delinquent activities. In addition to that, students with high EQ level are socially and personally intelligent. Hence, they have an advantage in school. However, Goleman (1995) strongly believed academic intelligence does not influence EQ. Those who have a high IQ do not necessarily have a high EQ and those who have a high EQ do not necessarily have a high IQ. Nevertheless, most people do have a high IQ as well as high EQ. To do well in life, a person needs to have a balance IQ and EQ. People with high IQ can sometimes have poor EQ. Therefore; having a high IQ does not determine prestige and happiness in life. In one study, a primary school boy has an impaired frontal cortex functioning, which is associated with EQ. The boy is at risk of social problems because he has little control of his emotional life. When emotions are out of control, one can become pathological, overwhelming anxiety, raging anger and manic agitation. A neurologist, Dr. Antonio Damasia said, people who have impaired prefrontal functioning may make awful decision-making. Yet, their IQ are still normal and work just fine (Goleman, 1995). This shows that IQ and EQ do not have an influence on each other. Seal, Naumann, Scott, Royce- Davis (2010) said, it is usually the EQ that influenced our thoughts, actions and results. Palmer, Donaldson and Stough (2002) said, EQ involves considerable reasoning.

2.2. Psychological well-being

According to Wilkinson and Walford (1998), psychological well-being means the level of someone's happiness and the positive affect it brings to a person. Wilkinson and Walford (1998) mentioned that a person's psychological well-being could be influenced by depression. Depression usually leads to unhappiness, worrisome and despair. When a person is faced with depression, then the person is said to be in a poor state of psychological well-being. According to Extremera and Fernandez-Berrocal (2005), how people feel is a significant part of psychological well-being. Depression can be dangerous to children and adolescents because they are still young and may not know how to regulate their own emotion and behaviour. When children and adolescents are depressed, it can be seen through their behaviour and mood. Goleman (1995) said that children are likely to do poorly in school when they are depressed. It is difficult to pay attention in class during depression because depression interferes with memory and concentration.

Past researchers have found that the quality of social support may promote psychological well-being even in stressful situations (Md-Sidin, Sambasiran and Ismail, 2010). It is proven by research that social support has a direct effect to a person's psychological well-being. When a person receives good social support it is linked to positive psychological well-being which in turn leads to a better quality of life.

Research has shown that higher level of parental support has been connected with higher self-esteem in the adolescents. Apart from that, the adolescents show better school adjustment. Lower level of parental support on the other hand, has been linked with psychological distress and emotional problems in adolescents (Rueger, Malecki and Demaray, 2010; Carpenter and Clyman, 2004). Support from friends is also needed to maintain a healthy psychological well-being. It was found that support from friends is associated to lower depression level in both boys and girls. Apart from parental and peer support, teachers are also influential in children and adolescents' psychological well-being. A teacher's support is proven to raise the students' academic achievement (Rueger, Malecki and Demaray, 2010). Teachers who are always giving support, motivation and encouragement to the students will raise the students' ability to learn. According to research, school climate itself can influence the students' psychological well-being. A good school climate can lower depression, give positive high school adjustment and boost self-esteem (Rueger, Malecki and Demaray, 2010). When students receive positive input from the school, their level of psychological well-being will be high.

Sui (2009) believed that a person should know how to regulate his or her own emotions. It was found that adolescents who perceived themselves as being able to regulate their own emotions have low level of depression, antisocial behavior as well as delinquency (Zeidner and Olnick-Shemesh, 2010; Sui, 2009). In accordance to Gohm and Clore (2002), people who are aware of their feeling can deal better with their emotions and thus will experience greater psychological well-being compared to people who are not aware of their feelings. Those who understand their own emotions and are able to treat their emotions were associated with positive psychological well-being (Gohm and Clore, 2002). Regulating emotions is much related to Emotional Intelligence or EQ. Individuals who perceived themselves as having high level of EQ are good at regulating their emotions. This is because they know their emotions well (Zeidner and Olnick-Shemesh, 2010). Several studies have associated high EQ with lower levels of distress and stress-related emotions, which contribute to higher levels of psychological well-being (Zeidner and Olnick-Shemesh, 2010).

2.3. Life satisfaction

Sousa and Lyubomirsky (2001) defined life satisfaction as acceptance of one's life circumstances. Diener (1984) defined life satisfaction as an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular time. Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) also added that life satisfaction refers to a cognitive, judgmental process. According to Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick (2008), one of the components of happiness is satisfaction with life. Individuals need to be truly satisfied with their life in order to be happy. Unhappiness with life can decrease life satisfaction, which is a risk factor for suicide (Koikumaa-Honkanen et. al, 2001). Beutell (2006) said life satisfaction is also related to a healthier mental health. It is believed that when individuals are satisfied with their life, their mental health will improve too. It was found that people who are able to perceive and express their emotions have greater life satisfaction. Palmer, Donaldson and Stough (2002) found that people who are able to regulate and manage emotions are related to life satisfaction as well. In accordance to Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf and Kuyper (2010), social support is positively related to satisfaction of life. People who receive supportive social relationship and supportive interpersonal relationship usually have less anxiety because they are happy with their life. No matter where the social supports come from; be it from parents, peers, teachers, or colleagues, it has been associated with intrinsic value and self-concept which lead someone to have a high level of life satisfaction. People who do not receive good social support and interpersonal relationship are likely to be angry and anxious which make them dissatisfied about their life. Moreover, it is believed that a supportive social network can help to enhance a person's self-confidence and to help reach goals so that one's life is more meaningful (Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf and Kuyper, 2010).

Self-perception is also important in a person's psychological well-being because it can influence the satisfaction of life. Positive perception about the self is likely to increase a person's confidence and self-esteem. However, negative self-perceptions in adolescence are linked with truancy and interference in the classroom (Petrides, Frederickson and Furham, 2004). Researchers believed that adolescents who perceived themselves as competent and who value knowledge that they learn in school tend to have better academic achievement than those who do not perceive themselves as competent (Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf and Kuyper, 2010).

Adults' life satisfaction is very much linked with their job or career. According to Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf and Kuyper (2010), satisfaction at the work place is a great influence with satisfaction of life. Many studies have proven that quality of work life is associated with quality of life. When a person has a good work environment and good colleagues, the level of life satisfaction is higher when compared to others who lack such environment and colleagues. Md-Sidin, Sambasiran, Ismail (2010) believed if adults can balance their work life and family, they will be happier which in turn will give satisfaction in life. Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf and Kuyper (2010) found that women in Malaysia perceived a higher quality of life than their male counterpart.

3. Problem Statement

The problem that is of concern is that students who are enrolled in the e-learning by distance study program claimed they are very stressful in completing their assignments. It is very important to note that these students are working full time and on top of that, they are studying part time as well. However, students who are studying full time without taking any job also complained that they are very stressful in completing their assignments. Thus, this revelation leads to a question, which is, are the students having difficulties balancing their emotional intelligence (EQ) with their life? A person who can balance their Emotional Intelligence (EQ) level and their life are perceived as someone who is well balanced, happy and satisfied with their life. This is due to the fact that EQ can affect the students' psychological well-being and life satisfactory level. Anxiety, depression and stress for instance have high influence to the students' psychological well – being and life satisfactory level. There is a need to explore emotional intelligence between the part time and the full time students because the issue of having low EQ level can hinder the students from performing desirable behaviors in their academic and life. The purpose of having a high level of emotional intelligence is for the students' self-development and personal growth. Students who cannot control their emotions are said to be emotionally immature. Thus, this study explores the full time and part time students' EQ level for the betterment of the students' psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

4. Research Objectives

- To examine the significant difference between academic achievement and mode of learning
- To examine the significant difference between emotional intelligence and mode of learning
- To examine the significant difference between psychological well being and mode of learning
- To examine the significant difference between satisfaction with life and mode of learning

5. Methodology

The study employed the survey type of the descriptive research. The only instrument used to generate data for the study was a structured questionnaire. Questionnaires regarding 'emotional intelligence as predictor of psychological well – being and life satisfaction' were distributed randomly to 36 full time

students and 31 part time students who are studying Bachelor of Education at a public university in Selangor, Malaysia. The questionnaire was adapted from the ‘USM Emotional Quotient Inventory (USMEQ-i)’ by Muhamad Saiful Bahri Yusoff (2009), ‘General Well-Being20’ by Veit & Ware, 1983; Heubeck & Neill, 2000 and ‘Temporal satisfaction with life scale (TSWLS)’ by Pavot (1997). The questionnaire was designed to study the part-time students and full-time students’ emotional intelligence, psychological well-being and life satisfaction in the era of new technology. The questionnaire was divided into four parts which were called as Part A, Part B, Part C and Part D. Part A consisted of demographic data. Part B contained forty-six questions on emotional intelligence. Part C comprised of ten questions on psychological well-being and Part D consisted of fifteen questions on satisfaction with life. The students were required to read each statement on the questionnaire and circle the answers that most closely describe the way they actually are by using a Likert scale. Simple calculations like frequencies and percentages were used to describe the data. The data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version 16.

6. Findings

Objective 1: Analysis on the differences between academic achievement and mode of learning

Table 1. Independent t-test between academic achievement and mode of learning

	N	Mean	std dev	t	df	p
Full time	35	3.1383	.33285	.984	65	.329
Part time	31	3.0639	.27794			

Based on the independent t-test shown in table 1, there was no significant difference between academic achievement and mode of learning; where $t = 0.984$, $p = 0.329$. Therefore, the result indicates that the mode of learning, i.e. whether full time or part time do not show any significant effect on the academic achievement of the respondents.

Objective 2: Analysis on the differences between emotional intelligence and mode of learning

Table 2. Independent t-test between emotional intelligence and mode of learning

	N	Mean	std dev	t	df	p
Full time	35	2.7665	.08596	2.347	64	0.022
Part time	31	3.0007	.04265			

Table 2 revealed that the mean score for emotional intelligence of part-time students (mean= 3.0007, std = 0.04265) is higher than the mean score for emotional intelligence of full time students (mean= 2.7665, std= 0.08596). To determine if the mean scores are significantly different , an independent t-test was conducted and the result showed there was a significant difference between part –time and full time student where t- value= 2.347, $p = 0.022$. This indicates that part time students gave higher emotional intelligence than full time students.

Objective 3: Analysis on the differences between psychological well being and mode of learning

Table 3. Independent t-test between psychological wellbeing and mode of learning

	N	Mean	std dev	t	df	p
Full time	35	2.7056	.69814	1.705	65	0.093
Part time	31	2.9452	.37933			

Based on the independent t-test shown in table 3, there was no significant difference between psychological well being and mode of learning; where $t= 1.705$, $p= 0.093$. Therefore, the result indicates that the mode of learning, i.e. whether full time or part time do not show any significant effect on the psychological well being of the respondents.

Objective 4: Analysis on the differences between satisfaction with life and mode of learning

Table 4. Independent t-test between satisfaction with life and mode of learning

	N	Mean	std dev	t	df	p
Full time	35	4.3815	.92219	1.322	65	0.191
Part time	31	4.6882	.97424			

Based on the independent t-test shown in table 4, there was no significant difference between life satisfaction and mode of learning; where $t= 1.322$, $p= 0.191$. Therefore, the result indicates that the mode of learning, i.e. whether full time or part time do not show any significant effect on the life satisfaction of the respondents.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This study was aimed at comparing the effect of affective domains namely emotional intelligence, psychological well being and life satisfaction on mode of learning (part time and full time students). The result revealed that there was a significant difference between emotional intelligence and mode of learning, where the part timers seem to be more emotionally intelligent than the full time students. However, the result indicates that the psychological well being and life satisfaction do not show any significant effect on the mode of learning of the respondents. The result of this study is in line with the research done by Berenson et al (2008). Majority of the part timer students were on line distance learner as well as mature students. In this sense, age was also correlated with the number of online courses taken by participants. Hence, the older the participants, the greater their emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Previous studies showed that emotional characteristics that have been linked to online success include persistent effort, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy (Albritton, 2003; Holcomb, King, & Brown, 2004). These emotional predictors of online success are related with the construct of emotional intelligence. According to Blocher, De Montes, Willis, & Tucker (2002) adult learners who were basically part timer students were able to monitor their own learning and progress, garner peer support, exercise good time management skills, and draw on experience to find resources on the Internet. Besides, part-timers or online success is further predicted by several self-regulatory functions including effective

self-management, emotional self-regulation, self-generated motivation, self-efficacy, persistence, and an internal locus of control (Bocchi, Eastman, & Swift (2004).

Educators, educational providers and policy makers should view students as dynamic beings requiring a balance among academic advancement, life and work to live a more enhanced and fulfilling life. Hence, they should be more sensitive to include affective learning in the curriculum and assessment aspects. In this sense, Krathwohl et al., (1973) suggested that the design of teaching and learning activities does need to ensure that learners progress through the hierarchy of affective outcomes so as to avoid values being entrenched rather than developed. The data, however, should be interpreted with caution as they were based on a small sample from a single college, and all data were self-reported. However, findings could be helpful in designing future program and also a more in depth investigation across a myriad.

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