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A Measure of Emotional Intelligence in Texas School-Based Agricultural Educators

Introduction

The importance of the teacher role in effective instruction and student achievement has been well documented (Block, Crochet, Jones & Papa, 2012; Stough, Saklofske & Parker, 2009). Social and emotional learning as theorized by Douglass (2011) is important to successful student academic achievement. The refinement of those skills through professional development targeting pre-service and in-service teachers is important to student academic success and those student-teacher relationships which are essential for fostering academic success, aiding student avoidance of disaffection, attrition, and other self-destructive behaviors (Elias et al., 1997). Even though teachers supported social and emotional learning importance, few felt an allocation of time toward its instruction was necessary (Douglass, 2011). However, when schools attend to the students' social and emotional skills, academic achievements increase, incidents of problem behaviors decrease, and the quality of relationships surrounding each student in the school improves (Akers, Miller, Fraze, & Hagood, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The study utilized Human Capital theory (HCT), and the theory of Emotional Intelligence. HCT contends that humans can develop specific skills for self-improvement that will benefit their communities and local economy (Haynes, Gill, Chumbley, & Slater, 2014). Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000) specify that emotional intelligence is a powerful forecaster of important life outcomes, and influences a person's ability "to monitor one's own feelings and emotions as well as the feelings and emotions of others" (Boren, 2010, p. 56). In agricultural education, we must continue to improve our skillset to better teach the students of the next generation. It is important to note that generations of students keep changing (McElravy & Hastings, 2014) which further emphasizes the need for the development of emotional intelligence as time goes on. This study aligns with the American Association for Agricultural Education's (AAAE) National Research Agenda and addresses Research Priority 3, "Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce that Addresses the Challenges of the 21st Century" (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore the importance and inclusion of emotional intelligence in agricultural educators. As a means of accomplishing the purpose of the study, the following objectives guided this study:

1. Describe demographic information collected (i.e., gender, age, years teaching experience, etc.) of school-based agricultural education teachers in Texas.
2. Describe emotional intelligence levels of school-based agricultural educators in Texas.
3. To determine relationships between emotional intelligence sub-category areas of School-Based Agricultural Educators in Texas and overall emotional intelligence.

Methodology

The population for this study included all school-based agricultural educators in Texas during the 2018-2019 academic school year (N = 2434). Data were collected from 685 (28.14%) participants, with a completion rate of 27.32% (n = 665). The survey utilized the Qualtrics survey platform and sought to define the sample through 14 demographic questions (i.e., Gender,

Ethnicity, Age, etc.). The Genos Emotional Intelligence (EI) Model (Gignac, 2010) were used with responses based on a 5-point Likert-Scale with either a direct or inverse relationship (1 = Almost Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Usually; 5 = Almost Always) comprised of 31 questions. Descriptive statistics and correlational statistics were analyzed ($p = \leq .05$) using SPSS 24.0 and evaluated according to Davis (1971) convention, where 1.00 = perfect, .70 – .99 = very high, .50 – .69 = substantial, .30 – .49 = moderate, .10 – .29 = low, .01 – .09 = negligible.

Results/Findings

Research question one sought to determine demographics of the sample. The majority of the respondents were described as male (55.4%), Caucasian (91.3%), under the age of 25 (17.5%), and holding a Bachelor's Degree as their highest degree (63.9%). The majority of those surveyed (n = 149) were described as having 0-3 years teaching (23.7%) experience overall.

Research question two sought to determine the emotional intelligence levels of school-based agricultural educators in Texas. Seven sub-categories make up the overall Emotional Intelligence (EI) score. The highest ranking EI core skill score was Emotional Reasoning (ER) (M = 19.12; SD = 1.41), with the lowest ranking core skill, Emotional Self-Control (ESC) ($M = 15.67$; $SD = 3.53$).

Research question three sought to determine relationships between emotional intelligence sub-category areas of School-Based Agricultural Educators in Texas and overall emotional intelligence. When allowing for respondents EI sub-category scores and Overall EI scores, a correlational analysis was conducted, and statistically significant correlations emerged. A very high positive correlation was observed between Overall Emotional Intelligence (OEI) and Emotional Self-Management (r = .853; p = .000); OEI and Emotional Expression (r = .829; p = .000); and OEI and Emotional Management of Others (r = .810; p = .000) Davis (1971).

Conclusions

The study found that in past research Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2000), that females have a higher Emotional Intelligence than males in Total EI Score, the sub-categories of ESA and EAO, however, Strickland's (2008) research indicated that in the sub-categories of Emotional intelligence, it is found that women have a higher emotional intelligence in some sub-categories, whereas men out perform them in other areas like ESC.

Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate a need for replication of research. As indicated in the findings, a disparity in significance existed between genders with regards to sub-category findings in the Genos Emotional Intelligence (EI) instrument. Since this instrument utilized the concise version of the test, the Genos (EI) full inventory survey should be used to further determine potential findings in the study. Additionally, expansion of the researched population would allow for better generalization of the results. Since it has been determined that teacher effectiveness is positively correlated with student success, professional development targeting improvement in Emotional Intelligence should occur.

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