

## CORRELATES OF EMPATHY ON SUSTAINABLE PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Rosemary O. Ekechukwu

Department of Educational Psychology Guidance and Counselling, University of Port Harcourt, NIGERIA.

[Mamatriplets01@yahoo.com](mailto:Mamatriplets01@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the correlates of empathy on sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions with three corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. A correlation research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised all the 8452 (4413 male and 4039 female senior students) in the senior secondary school students in the 247 schools in Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 4226 (2207 male and 2019 female) students. The stratified random sampling technique using 20% of the population gave the sample size. Two self designed non cognitive instruments titled "Correlates of Empathy Scale" (CES) and "Sustainable Peaceful Co-existence Scale" (SPCS) were used for data collection. The two instruments were structured after the modified Likert four point response options. The CES has 30 items while the SPCS has 15 items. The face and content validities were ensured. The internal consistency reliability method using Cronbach alpha gave the reliability coefficients of CES and SPCS at 0.79 and 0.86 respectively. The Pearson Product Moment statistics was used for data analysis. It was found out among others that correlates of empathy (cognitive, emotional and compassionate) have a positive high relationship with sustainable peaceful co-existence among students. It was recommended that school guidance-councillors should work mostly on the affective domain of the students in order to activate their emotion and compassion to enable them accommodate other students' weaknesses for effective co-existence. Moreover, the classroom teachers should involve their students in perspective-talking in order to neutralize lackluster and negative thoughts within them that can impede their academic best.*

**Keywords:** Empathy (Cognition, Emotion and Compassion), Sustainable Peaceful and Co-existence

### INTRODUCTION

A peaceful school environment is an environment that allows for effective teaching and learning. It is also worthy to note that a peaceful school environment has to do with the environment that has maintained peaceful coexistence with the host community. Moreover, peaceful school environment is seen as unfettered to the supposed relationship between the students, teachers, principals and the host community. There is peaceful coexistence among school students when they palled around in the areas of reading, researching, skill acquisition and sporting activities. A hostile environment suffices when students begin to bully each other, form criminal gangs, prostitution, and cultism. López and García (2004) opined that the important to educate society to learn to live together gives path to a diversity of educational projects, and social movements, with different approaches, but all with a common goal, to favour the coexistence in the educational centres and in the classrooms. López and García (2004) went further to stress that it is necessary to educate for coexistence, if not the risk may exist that the absence of cohesion is regarded as something unavoidable, that we have to tolerate and allow.

The objectives of post-basic education according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013, 17) are to:

- a. Provide holders of the basic education certificate and junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate with opportunity for education of higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- b. Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles;
- c. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences. Technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- d. Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- e. Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;
- f. Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- g. Foster patriotism, national unity and security education with emphasis on the common ties in spite of our diversity; and
- h. Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour.

Without peaceful coexistence among students and as well as the teachers the noble goals of post basic education above be farfetched. Section (g) of these objectives spelt it out very clearly that basic education should foster patriotism, national unity and security education. This goes a long way of showing the importance of peaceful coexistence in the fulfillment of secondary educational goals and objectives. Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia (2017) saw peace education as the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment.

Empathy is the ability of individuals to be sensitive and respond swiftly to emotions of others. Thomas (2013) stated that emotional empathy is our automatic drive to respond appropriately to another's emotions. This kind of empathy happens automatically, and often unconsciously. It has also been referred to as the vicarious sharing of emotions. Goleman (2007) stressed that cognitive empathy simply applies knowing how the other person feels and what they might be thinking. Sometimes called perspective-taking, this kind of empathy can help in, say, a negotiation or in motivating people. Thomas (2013) opined that cognitive empathy is the largely conscious drive to recognize accurately and understand another's emotional state. Sometimes we call this kind of empathy "perspective taking". Empathy as the hallmark of sustainable peaceful relationship has not been duly proven by empirically.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Peace as a value, culture, attitude and custom has not been properly inculcated in Nigeria students mostly in Rivers State, Nigeria. This has made these students to leave in hostility, rivalry disagreement and disassociation within and without the school environment. This unwanted scenario has prompted debilitating and devastating existence among the students. Researches and personnel experience have shown that lack of peaceful co-existence has stalled the opportunities of bringing the best out of the Nigeria students. If sustainable

peaceful co-existence is not brought into secondary schools in Rivers State for effective and efficient teaching and learning to take place, students may be left with the option to join cultism, prostitution, armed robbery or militancy hence compounding the state of unrest that is being experienced around Niger Delta region in Nigeria. The question is, will correlates of empathy significantly relate to sustainable peaceful co-existence among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The study investigated the correlates of empathy on sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. Determine the relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. Ascertain the relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study

1. what is the relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. what is the relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. what is the relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?

### **HYPOTHESES**

The following null hypotheses were answered at 0.05 alpha level.

1. there is no significant relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. there is no significant relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. there is no significant relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The study adopted a correlation research design. The population of the study comprised all the 8452 (4413 male and 4039 female) senior secondary school students in the 247 schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample size of the study is 4226 (2207 male and 2019 female) senior secondary school students. The simple random sampling technique was used draw the sample of the study using 20% of the population. Two self designed non-cognitive instruments titled “Correlates of Empathy Scale” (CES) and “Sustainable Peaceful Co-existence Scale” (SPCS). The CES has two sections and was structured after the four points

Likert rating options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The CES has four sections. Section A contains the demographic information of the respondents while sections B, C and D contain 10 items each to measure cognitive empathy, emotional empathy and compassionate empathy respectively. The second instrument SPCS contains 15 items on a modified four points Likert rating options of Strong Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Face and content validities were ensured by experts in Conflict Resolution and Psychology in the University of Port Harcourt. The internal consistency method using Cronbach alpha was used to calculate the reliability coefficients of CES to be 0.79 and PCS to be 0.86 respectively. The Pearson Product Moment correlation statistics was used to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using z-ratio at 0.05 alpha level.

## RESULTS

The result of the study is as presented below:

**Research Question One:** what is the relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Hypothesis One:** there is no significant relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 1. Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence**

| Categories                        | N    | Df   | r-cal. | Z-ratio | z-crit. | p-cal | p-crit. | Decision                  |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|--------|---------|---------|-------|---------|---------------------------|
| Cognitive empathy                 |      |      |        |         |         |       |         |                           |
| Sustainable peaceful co-existence | 4226 | 4225 | 0.79   | 15.8    | 1.96    | 0.00  | 0.05    | Statistically significant |

Table 1 revealed that the r-value is 0.79. Therefore, there is a positive high relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. This shows that an increase in the independent variable is related to an increase in the dependent variable. The degree of freedom is given as 4225, the calculated z-ratio value of 15.8 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96. Also, the calculated probability value of 0.00 is less than the critical probability value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, there is a significant relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria

**Research Question Two:** what is the relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Hypothesis Two:** there is no significant relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 2. Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful coexistence**

| Categories                        | N    | Df   | r-cal. | z-ratio | z-crit. | p-cal | p-crit. | Decision                  |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|--------|---------|---------|-------|---------|---------------------------|
| Emotional empathy                 |      |      |        |         |         |       |         |                           |
| Sustainable peaceful co-existence | 4226 | 4225 | 0.91   | 13.6    | 1.96    | 0.00  | 0.05    | Statistically significant |

Table 2 revealed that the r-value is 0.91. Therefore, there is a positive high relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. This shows that an increase in the independent variable is related to an increase in the dependent variable. The degree of freedom is given as 4225, the calculated z-ratio value of 13.6 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96. Also, the calculated probability value of 0.00 is less than the critical probability value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, there is a significant relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Research question Three:** what is the relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?

**Hypothesis Three:** there is no significant relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Table 3. Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient of the relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful coexistence**

| Categories                        | N    | df   | r-cal. | z-ratio | z-crit. | p-cal | p-crit. | Decision                  |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|--------|---------|---------|-------|---------|---------------------------|
| compassionate empathy             |      |      |        |         |         |       |         |                           |
| Sustainable peaceful co-existence | 4226 | 4225 | 0.75   | 16.0    | 1.96    | 0.01  | 0.05    | Statistically significant |

Table 3 revealed that the r-value is 0.75. Therefore, there is a positive high relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

This shows that an increase in the independent variable is related to an increase in the dependent variable. The degree of freedom is given as 4225, the calculated z-ratio value of 16.0 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96. Also, the calculated probability value of 0.01 is less than the critical probability value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. By implication, there is a significant relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study are discussed under the following subheadings as shown below:

### **Cognitive Empathy and Sustainable Peaceful Co-existence**

It was found out that there is a significant positive high relationship between cognitive empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among students in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study of Amaeze (2014) provided credence to the finding of this study when he found out that peacefulness and safety are determined by the students' and teachers' emotional intelligence and knowledge endowment.

### **Emotional Empathy and Sustainable Peaceful Co-existence**

The researcher found a very high positive relationship between emotional empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study corroborated the finding of Amaeze (2014) when he found out that peaceful co-existence is a function of emotional attribution and application.

### **Compassionate Empathy and Sustainable Peaceful Co-existence**

The study found a positive high significant relationship between compassionate empathy and sustainable peaceful co-existence among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The finding of this study was supported with the finding of Osaka (2017) when he reported that proper development of cognitive domain enhances sense of belongingness among students.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that proper development of students' empathy in the areas of cognition, emotion and compassion is a valid and reliable determinant and predictor of peaceful co-existence in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It was recommended that:

1. School guidance-councillors should work mostly on the affective domain of the students in order to activate emotion and compassion that will enable them to accommodate other students' weaknesses for effective co-existence.
2. Classroom teachers should involve their students in perspective-talking in order to neutralize lackluster and negative thoughts within them that can impede their academic best.
3. Civic education teachers should do their best in developing civilization in the students on the role of effective relationship and peace education before they move to the senior section of secondary school.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Akaranta, A. W. (2016). *Relationship between compassionate disposition and students' well being in secondary schools in Imo State*. Nigeria: Imo State University.
- [2] Amaeze, F.E. (2014). Students' peacefulness and emotional treatise in public senior secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, 3(3), 19-24.
- [3] Goleman, D. (2007). *Emotional intelligence and social intelligence*. Retrieved from <http://www.danielgoleman.info/three-kinds-of-empathy-cognitive-emotional-compassionate/>.
- [4] López, J.M., & García, I.F. (2004). *Coexistence in educational centres*. Spain: Ministry of Science and Education.
- [5] Osaka, C.S. (2017). Cognitive intelligence and students' perspective thinking. *Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, 3(3), 30-34.
- [6] Thomas, A. C. (2013). *Emotional and cognitive empathy*. Retrieved from <http://blog.teleosleaders.com/2013/07/19/emotional-empathy-and-cognitive-empathy/>.
- [7] Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia. (2017). *Peace education*. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_education).