

Emotional Intelligence among Undergraduate Nursing Students

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Abstract

Introduction: Emotional intelligence (EI) has a great effect on the quality of learning and application of the learned knowledge in practice. Emotional Intelligence usage is currently being understood as a fundamental requirement of nursing in care provision to patients. Emotional intelligence can assist nurses in managing their own and their patients' emotions, showing genuine emotional responses, being empathetic and communicate emotions without introducing conflict and managing instinctive emotions, such as disgust, annoyance and frustration, in nurse-patient interactions. The study is conducted with the aim to assess the emotional intelligence among the nursing students.

Materials and methods: The subjects of this study were composed of 150 B.Sc. (Nursing) students and are selected by non-probability convenience sampling technique. Emotional Intelligence was assessed by using Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) which consists of 33 items and three aspects i.e. appraisal and expression of emotion, regulation of emotion and utilization of emotion.

Result: The mean score of emotional intelligence was 123 ± 25.5 . A significant association has been found with father's education and birth order with Appraisal and expression of emotion aspect of EI. The result also revealed that 50.7% participants have high emotional intelligence.

Conclusion: Nursing profession requires the display of a lot of emotional control, expression of appropriate emotions to convey the caring attribute. It is the hardest and most emotionally drained profession which requires good physical and mental health. As this study revealed that almost half of the students scored low in emotional intelligence assessment, therefore the nurse educators should focus to empower EI among the nursing students.

Key Words: Emotional intelligence (EI), Nursing students

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I. Introduction

Assessment of emotional intelligence is an important factor in determining students' adjustment and educational achievements. Attending college is a life-changing experience. It includes meeting new people and doing something novel. The first year in college, academically speaking, presents wonderful opportunities to know different academic disciplines. But since college is very different from high school, college freshmen may experience a lot of changes that can lead to problems. It is believed that emotional intelligence may explain differences in the quality of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships and contribute to job performance and management effectiveness and predict success.¹

Emotional intelligence (EI) is increasingly discussed as having a potential role in other healthcare disciplines, both for personal mental health and professional practice. EI has been linked to academic performance and studied in other professions.²⁻⁹ Nursing is a noble profession with accountability towards the caring relationship of clients. Nurses are the frontline members of the health care profession and due to the nature of being in contact with people, they need to be acquainted with the attribute of EI. In addition, EI is proclaimed as a powerful determinant in decision making skills.¹⁰ Emotional intelligence (EI) has been associated with positive outcomes for nursing students. Higher EI is associated with personal wellbeing and stress management, higher academic performance, stronger nursing leadership and practice performance, and greater patient safety.¹¹ Today, nursing education which educates the future members of the nursing profession aims to gain them high self-esteem, self-confidence and self-compassion, independence, assertiveness and ability to establish good human relations.¹² Developing emotional intelligence should be a useful adjunct to improve academic and clinical performance and to reduce the risk of emotional distress during clinical placement experiences.

The results of the studies on Emotional intelligence show that there has been a direct relationship between emotional intelligence and positive organizational performance including more appropriate teamwork, more effective interactions, more solutions for conflicts, and lower levels of tension.¹³

Nursing students are required to manage numerous clinical situations, adapt to the different teaching styles and expectations of instructors, work independently toward objectives, and manage conflicts. In addition, some aspects of academic work may be considered highly stressful for nursing students such as taking exams and practicing nursing procedures in health care settings. These situations require high levels of emotional management.^{8,9,10} Therefore the need was felt to assess the emotional intelligence among nursing students.

II. Objectives

1. To assess the emotional intelligence among the undergraduate nursing students in a selected nursing institution in Silchar, Assam.
2. To find out the association between the emotional intelligence and socio-demographic variables among the undergraduate nursing students in a selected nursing institution in Silchar, Assam.

III. Method and Materials

Study design adopted for the present study was descriptive cross sectional design. The Nursing College in Government sector at Silchar, Assam had been chosen as setting. Data had been collected during the month of June, 2018. Study participants were the undergraduate nursing students which include first to fourth year students. 150 students who wanted to participate voluntarily have been included in the study. Written permissions were obtained from the head of the institution of the college. Informed consent were obtained from the study participants. The tool consists of two parts:

Part 1: It was developed by the researchers to elicit information about the socio-demographic characteristics and other associated factors of the studied subjects such as students' age, year of studying, father's education, mother's education, student's birth order, domicile, willingness to join nursing, any recent major stress factor in less than 6 months and presence of support system.

Part 2: The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) has been used to assess the emotional intelligence. It was originally developed by Salovey & Mayer 1990 then it was modified by Schutte et al., 1998¹⁴. The scale consists of 33 items, which are rated on a five-point Likert scale that ranges from 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither disagree nor agree, 4= agree, 5=strongly agree. SSEIT includes three categories which are appraisal and expression of emotions (13 items), regulation of emotions (10 items) and utilization of emotions (10 items). The score ranged from 33 to 165 with the higher scores indicating more characteristic EI. The score range of Appraisal of expression of emotion aspect is 13-65, whereas the score range of Regulation of emotion aspect is 10-50 and Utilization of emotion aspect is 10-50. For this study, the median value of each of the three aspects and higher is considered as high level of EI for the particular aspect.

The data collected were systematically coded, computed and analyzed with descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage), and inferential statistics (Chi square and Fishers exact test) using SPSS 20.0 version. Analysis of the data was done in accordance with the study objectives. A p-value of <0.05 was considered to indicate statistical significance.

IV. Results

A total of 150 nursing students participated in this survey. As given in Table 1 most (57.3%) participants were of 21-22 years of age and were from 3rd and 4th year of B.Sc nursing course.

Table 1: Selected Socio-demographic characteristics and other associated variables of the undergraduate nursing students

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	19-20 years	43	28.7%
	21-22 years	86	57.3%
	23-24 years	21	14.0%
Year of Studying	1 st Year	31	20.7%
	2 nd Year	21	14.0%
	3 rd Year	49	32.7%
	4 th Year	49	32.7%
Father's Education	Illiterate	00	00%
	Primary	02	1.3%
	Middle school	10	6.7%
	High school	11	7.3%

	Higher Secondary	48	32.0%
	Graduate	60	40.0%
	Post Graduate	19	12.7%
Mother's Education	Illiterate	00	00%
	Primary	03	2.0%
	Middle school	12	8.0%
	High school	39	26.0%
	Higher Secondary	51	34.0%
	Graduate	38	25.3%
	Post Graduate	07	4.7%
Birth Order	First	81	54.0%
	Second	47	31.3%
	Third	15	10.0%
	Fourth	02	1.3%
	Fifth & Up	05	3.3%
Domicile	Urban	48	32.0%
	Rural	78	52.0%
	Semi-urban	24	16.0%
Joined nursing at your own choice	Yes	122	81.3%
	No	28	18.7%
Any recent major stress factor in last 6 months	Yes	41	27.3%
	No	109	72.7%
Support system present	Yes	131	87.3%
	No	19	12.7%

The level of education of their fathers was mostly (40.0%) graduate and most (32.2%) of their mothers were completed higher secondary education. Most of the subjects (54%) were first born as per the birth order and belonged to rural domicile. More than half of the subject (81.3%) joined the nursing course at their own choice. In the study most of the student (72.7%) denied any recent major stress factor that occurred in last 6 months and also most of the subjects (87.3%) reported the presence of support system.

The mean of Appraisal and expression of emotion is 45.81, whereas 38 and 39.13 is for Regulation of emotion and Utilization of emotion aspect respectively (Table 2)

Table 2: Mean, median and standard deviations of aspects of emotional intelligence (n=150)

Categories	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Standard Error
Appraisal and expression of emotions	45.81	48	8.48	0.69
Regulation of emotions	38.0	40.5	9.33	0.76
Utilization of emotions	39.13	42	9.30	0.76
Total emotional intelligence	123	130	25.5	2.09

In appraisal and expression of emotion aspect 51.3% subjects has shown high level of EI, whereas 53.3% has shown high level of EI in utilization of emotion aspect. In the aspect of regulation of emotion it is equally distributed as high and low EI among the participants (Table 3).

Table-3: Level of emotional intelligence as per three aspects of Emotional Intelligence

Aspects of Emotional Intelligence	High Emotional intelligence	Low Emotional intelligence
Appraisal and expression of emotion	51.3%	48.7%
Regulation of emotion	50%	50%
Utilization of emotion	53.3%	46.7%
Total EI	50.7%	49.3%

Table-4: Association between socio-demographic variables with three aspects of Emotional Intelligence (n=150)

Variables	Emotional Intelligence		
	Appraisal and expression of emotion	Regulation of emotion	Utilization of emotion
Age	1.05 (p>0.05)	1.60 (p>0.05)	3.37 (p>0.05)
Year of studying	1.87 (p >0.05)	1.08 (p>0.05)	2.81 (p >0.05)
Father's education	10.83 * (p <0.05)	3.43 (p>0.05)	2.32 (p>0.05)
Mother's education	0.92 (p>0.05)	4.02 (p>0.05)	3.74 (p>0.05)
Birth order	10.1* (p<0.05)	4.14 (p>0.05)	8.51* (p<0.05)
Domicile	0.96 (p>0.05)	1.21 (p>0.05)	0.045 (p>0.05)
Joined nursing at your own choice	2.81 (p>0.05)	2.81 (p>0.05)	1.51 (p>0.05)
Any recent major stress factor in last 6 months	0.034 (p>0.05)	2.71 (p>0.05)	3.19 (p>0.05)
Support system present	0.54 (p>0.05)	0.06 (p>0.05)	1.1 (p>0.05)

As given in Table 4 it shows the association between three aspects of emotional intelligence with the selected socio-demographic variables. The outcome is statistically analyzed using Chi-square/ Fischer's Exact test. The results revealed that there is statistically significant association between birth order and father's education with emotional intelligence. The table also shows no association between age, year of studying, mother's education, and domicile, choice of Joining nursing, any recent major stress and support system.

V. Discussion

The findings of the current study revealed that majority(57.3%) students' age ranged between 21-22 years. The majority of students were in their 3rd and 4th year of nursing course. The study also revealed that majority fathers of students were educated up to graduate level (40.0%) while the majority of the students' mothers (34.0%) were educated up to higher secondary level. Majority of students (54.0%) were first born as per birth order and belonged to rural domicile (52.0%). According to the report majority of the students joined nursing at their own choice (81.3%) and didn't report any recent major stress factor in last 6 months (72.7%). All nursing students reported the presence of support system in their life (87.3%). The results were similar with the results of study conducted by Sinha Bet al (2017)²² who studied the emotional intelligence of undergraduate nursing students. The findings of the study showed that the mean age of the students' was 21.78, majority (98%) of the fathers and approximately 96% of the mothers were literate.

The current study findings illustrates that the mean score of EI among the participants were 45.81± 8.48, 39.13± 9.3 and 38±9.3 on appraisal and expression of emotions, utilization of emotions and regulation of emotions respectively. A study conducted by Ibrahim HA et al revealed a similar result where they conducted a study on assessment of emotional intelligence among obstetrics and gynecologic nursing students¹⁶. They reported a mean score of students' EI of 43.57±6.63, 33.84±6.69, and 33.76 ± 6.60 related to appraisal and expression of emotions, regulation of emotions and utilization of emotions respectively. In addition, the total EI mean score was 110.5±17.46 whereas the present study reported a little higher total EI score that i.e. 123 ±23.5.

The present study also describes the level of EI among undergraduate nursing students. Among the 150 students who participated in this study, nearly half of the students (50.7%) have showed a high level of EI. Though it shows half of the students are having high emotional intelligence it still shows the need of improving emotional intelligent among rest half of the nursing students. For developing emotional intelligence nurse educators in the nursing institutions should include emotional intelligence in the nursing curriculum.

Regarding the association between different aspects of emotional intelligence, the study reported that father's education is significantly associated with appraisal and expression of emotions. The findings which is similar to findings of the study done by Akbar M¹⁷, Snowden A¹⁸, Vahidi M¹⁹ with respect to father's literacy. This could be due to the reason that father with high education are well learned about the role of parents in the emotional development of children. They know the importance of spending time with his children which directly and indirectly influence the emotional intelligence of the children. Similar findings also revealed by a study conducted by Harrod and Scheer (cited by Lankashini et al) which indicated that EI level is positively related to parents' education.²⁰

The present study revealed that there is significant association with birth order and Appraisal & expression of emotion and Utilization of emotion aspect of EI. The majority (54%) of the study subjects were of first child as per birth order among the siblings. This result contradicts the study result revealed by Venkateshwar A and Warriar U where they assessed the effect of birth order in the emotional intelligence of students, the study reported no significant differences between birth order and emotional intelligence.²¹

Limitation

Sample size of this study is only 150 and it is difficult to generalize the results. Another limitation is that the study included only the female nursing students of a selected Govt nursing institution, so it cannot be generalized for male gender.

VI. Conclusion

The study concluded that half of the participants revealed low EI. There is a need to improve the emotional intelligence among them as growing complexity of the healthcare environment and increasing expectations of clients in today's competitive healthcare industry demands nurses who possess a higher level of emotional intelligence.

Current work is a preliminary attempt in the direction of assessment of emotional intelligence among nursing students. Further study can be done to assess the correlation of emotional intelligence and various influential factors. An evaluative study can be done to assess the effectiveness of training program on the level of emotional intelligence among the nursing students.

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Conflict Of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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