EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

As a significant field of study, nursing is one of the majors in which the role of multiple intelligences such as emotional intelligence seem more important compared to other fields of study. These intelligences have a remarkable impact on the nursing students' progress.

The present study was aimed at examining emotional intelligence and its relationship with demographic characteristics among nursing students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the present descriptive study, 300 nursing students were selected by a simple randomly sampling method. The required data was retrieved from the students using Sharing Emotional Intelligence Scale and a demographic information questionnaire and analysed through descriptive statistics and correlational tests using SPSS 21.0.

RESULTS

The students' mean age was 21.37 ± 2.39 years. Most of the students were men (55%) and juniors (30%) (Semester 7 (17.1%)). The mean (standard deviation) of emotional intelligence was 104.04 (13.75). Based on Pearson correlation coefficient, the correlation of age (0.084) and average (0.016) with the total score of emotional intelligence was low and there was no significant linear relationship between them ($p > 0.05$). However, there was a significant positive relationship between age and the field of social skills with a correlation of coefficient of 0.127 ($p = 0.032$). Also, there was a significant positive relationship between average and the field of self-motivation with a correlation coefficient of 0.124 ($p = 0.037$).

CONCLUSION

The students had an average emotional intelligence. It is recommended that students need to be provided with workshops aimed at boosting their emotional intelligence in order to promote academic levels among nursing students.

KEY WORDS

Emotional Intelligence, Demographic Characteristics, Students, Nursing.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: Ghasemi SS, Farrokhi S, Najafi M, et al. Emotional intelligence and its relationship with demographic characteristics among nursing students. J. Evolution Med. Dent. Sci. 2018;7(30):3419-3422, DOI: 10.14260/jemds/2018/771

BACKGROUND

Emotion is a psychological construct which consists of evaluating cognition, motives and situations. Emotional intelligence is needed to manage the emotions.^[1] Emotional intelligence includes non-cognitive capabilities, knowledge and qualifications that enable an individual to adapt to different living conditions successfully.^[2] Bar-on considers emotional intelligence as a pure factor in flourishing the individual's ability to succeed in life and believes that it is

related to their emotional and mental health. He puts a lot of emphasis on interpersonal component in emotional intelligence. This component refers to the individual's ability to know and control their emotions and includes self-esteem, self-awareness, excitement, assertiveness, independence and self-actualisation.^[3]

Nursing students are placed in a unique situation with regard to their impact on the phenomenon of health, because nursing is the profession of helping. Nurses need to have knowledge and skills to be able to predict situations and results. They should be able to think purposefully and create new ideas and evaluate them and they should be able to utilise useful information in judgements, decisions and problem solving.^[4] Various studies have shown that nursing students experience stress regarding academic programs and clinical environments.^[5] Individuals with lower emotional intelligence adapt more poorly when they are faced with life stresses; therefore, they suffer from depression, despair and other negative outcomes more.^[6]

'Financial or Other Competing Interest': None.

Submission 08-06-2018, Peer Review 04-07-2018,

Acceptance 11-07-2018, Published 23-07-2018.

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DOI: 10.14260/jemds/2018/771

Moreover, different studies have indicated that numerous factors are related to emotional intelligence. Results of some studies show that the ability to express emotion and sympathy is more in women than men; however, some studies have reported that there is no difference between boys and girls regarding their emotional intelligence.^[4] The results of the study conducted by Tehrani et al (2012) show that there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health and academic achievement. They also reported that there was a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and educational semesters.^[7] As future nurses nursing students play a critical role in treatment teams; therefore, their role needs to be paid special attention.^[8] Since few studies have focused on this issue and there is a dire need to study emotional intelligence among nursing students, the researcher decided to concentrate on this important issue in a study entitled, "Emotional intelligence and its relationship with demographic characteristics among nursing students" in order to take an effective step forward to know the students' problems and help promote health of people and the society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present descriptive study was carried out from August to January 2017 in Nursing Faculty, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences. 300 individuals were taken for the study. The sample size was taken for convenience. Of the 300 students, 286 were analysed. The sampling method adopted is purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were studying nursing B.Sc., lack of known mental disease and willingness to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria were lack of consent to continue participating in the study.

Data collection instruments were a demographic information questionnaire and Siberia Sharing Emotional Intelligence Scale. Siberia Sharing Emotional Intelligence Scale was designed by Siberia Sharing in 1999. It consists of subscales of self-motivation (7 items), self-awareness (8 items), self-control (7 items), social intelligence (6 items) and social skills (8 items). It is scored using a 5-point Likert scale (never= 5 to always= 1). Items that are underlined are inversely scored (never= 1 to always= 5). The individual's scores range from 33 to 165 and higher scores indicate higher emotional intelligence. Farghdani (2003) reported the reliability and Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire as 0.78 and 0.74, respectively. Namazi et al (2015) reported its validity as 0.63.^[9] In the present study, Cronbach's Alpha was utilised to determine the reliability of the questionnaires, which showed a reliability of 0.814 that is acceptable.

After necessary permissions were obtained from Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and the Nursing and Midwifery Faculty, the researcher went to the students. After the introduction, letter was presented to the students. The objectives of the study were explained to them and written consent was retrieved from them. The study's instruments were distributed among the students and the collected data were analysed through descriptive and Pearson correlation and independent 't' tests using SPSS 21.0 at a confidence interval of 0.95.

RESULTS

With regard to the students' individual characteristics, the results of the present study showed that the mean ($\pm$ standard

deviation) of their age was 21.37 ($\pm$ 2.39). Most of the students were men (55%), single (85%) and the second child of their family (34.6%). Also, most of the students resided in dormitory (61.9%) and were seniors (30%) (Semester 7 (17.1%)). The students' mean emotional intelligence score was 104.04 (13.75).

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional intelligence (33-165)	67	151	204.04	13.75
Self-motivation (7-35)	13	35	21.79	3.35
Self-awareness (8-40)	16	37	26.74	4.86
Self-control (7-35)	10	35	21.14	3.56
Social intelligence or sympathy (6-30)	9	30	18.83	3.76
Social skills (5-25)	9	23	15.53	2.75

Table 1. The Students' description based on their Emotional Intelligence Scores

Variable	Frequency	Frequency Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional intelligence (0-100)				
Low (0-25)	0	0	0	0
Average (25-75)	277	96.90	52.91	9.24
High (75-100)	9	3.10	81.73	2.99

Table 2. The Students' distribution based on their Emotional Intelligence

Based on Pearson correlation coefficient, the correlation of age (0.084) and average (0.016) with the total score of emotional intelligence was low and they did not have a significant statistical linear relationship ($p > 0.05$). However, age had a significant positive correlation with social skills with a correlation coefficient of 0.127 ($p = 0.032$). Also, there was a significant positive relationship between self-motivation and average with a correlation coefficient of 0.124 ($p = 0.037$).

Variable		Emotional Intelligence					
		Emotional Intelligence	Self-Motivation	Self-Awareness	Self-Control	Social Intelligence or Sympathy	Social Skills
Age	Correlation Coefficient	0.084	0.035	0.082	0.051	0.030	0.127
Average	Probability Amount	0.154	0.558	0.166	0.388	0.617	0.032
	Correlation Coefficient	0.016	0.124	0.001	-0.010	-0.033	-0.015
	Probability Amount	0.792	0.037	0.998	0.872	0.583	0.801

Table 3. The Relationship between Quantitative Demographic Variables and Emotional Intelligence and its Areas in the students under Study

According to the results of Independent T-test, the mean ($\pm$ standard deviation) of emotional intelligence scores in women (54.95 ($\pm$ 11.01)) were significantly more than those of men (52.41 ($\pm$ 9.47)) ($p = 0.039$). In the areas of this scale,

women obtained higher mean scores than men. Also, women obtained significantly higher scores in the area of self-motivation ($p=0.003$) than men. Emotional intelligence scores were higher among the single students (54.33 (± 10.95)) than the married ones (50.93 (± 5.83)). This difference as shown by the results of Independent T-test was significant ($p=0.003$). In the areas of this scale, the single students also obtained higher scores than the married students. Moreover, compared to the married students, the single students obtained significantly higher scores in the areas of self-awareness ($p=0.001$) and social intelligence ($p=0.041$).

Variable (0-100)	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Statistic	Probability Amount
Emotional Intelligence	Man	52.41	9.47	2.07	0.039
	Woman	54.95	11.01		
Self-Motivation	Man	50.53	10.62	2.97	0.003
	Woman	54.70	12.68		
Self-Awareness	Man	56.69	13.11	1.94	0.060
	Woman	60.08	16.58		
Self-Control	Man	49.33	11.81	1.42	0.158
	Woman	51.46	13.39		
Social Intelligence or Sympathy	Man	53.03	15.66	0.39	0.691
	Woman	53.77	15.72		
Social Skills	Man	51.76	13.74	1.02	0.311
	Woman	53.42	13.77		

Table 4. The Relationship between Gender and Emotional Intelligence among the Students under Study

Variable (0-100)	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test Statistic	Probability Amount
Emotional Intelligence	Single	54.22	10.95	2.99	0.003
	Married	50.93	5.83		
Self-Motivation	Single	53.04	12.44	0.88	0.379
	Married	51.66	8.79		
Self-Awareness	Single	59.54	15.76	3.56	0.001
	Married	53.05	9.92		
Self-Control	Single	50.79	13.19	0.88	0.375
	Married	48.92	9.69		
Social Intelligence or Sympathy	Single	54.23	16.03	2.06	0.041
	Married	48.93	12.63		
Social Skills	Single	52.83	14.09	0.48	0.631
	Married	51.74	11.74		

Table 5. The Relationship between Marital Status and Emotional Intelligence among the Students under Study

DISCUSSION

The present study was carried out in order to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and demographic characteristics among nursing students. Most of the students in the present study had an average level of emotional intelligence (54.5%). In their study aimed at assessing the level of emotional intelligence and self-esteem in nursing and midwifery students of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, Jannati et al (2010) concluded that 13.8%, 71.7% and 14.5% of the students had respectively high, average and low emotional intelligence. In other words most of the students had average emotional intelligence which was also observed in the present study and in this regard the two studies are in agreement. Similarity between the populations of the two studies (Nursing students) can be the reason for this similarity of results. Ghaderi et al (2014) studied emotional intelligence among students of Ahvaz

Universities. They studied 303 students and the results of their study showed that most of the students had average emotional intelligence (77.23%).^[10] In contrast to the results of the present study were the results of the study carried out by Chinipardaz et al (2011),^[11] who studied emotional intelligence and its relationship with academic achievement among medical students of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. The medical students' average emotional intelligence in all 15 subscales was below the defined standard. This discrepancy can be attributed to the difference between the target groups and the sample size. The present study was carried out on nursing students, while Chinipardaz et al studied medical students. Also, the results of the study carried out by Shahbazi (2012) showed that the nursing students' emotional intelligence level was not standard, because there was no systematic training for that, but it can be enhanced by focusing on it^[12] which is not in agreement with the present study.

In the present study there was a correlation between the students' social skills, as an area of emotional intelligence and age, such that older students had higher social skills. Shaughnessy and Parker^[13] and Brown and Moshavi^[14] stated that higher age groups have higher emotional intelligence than lower age groups. Moreover, Benson et al^[15] pointed out that the nursing students' emotional intelligence increased from the first year to the fourth year of education. Given the characteristics mentioned for emotional intelligence, it is expected that emotional intelligence rises with an increase in the individual's age and exposure to educational and occupational situations and different individuals and cultures. In the present study, the female students' emotional intelligence was significantly higher than that of the male students. The results of the review study carried out by Naghavi and Redzuan indicated that girls had higher emotional intelligence than boys. According to the authors, compared to boys girls express their feelings more and cultural and belief differences of the society can affect this issue.^[16] In studies carried out on the relationship between gender and emotional intelligence by Molaei et al^[4] and Ghaedi et al, the total score of emotional intelligence had a significant relationship with gender and the areas of self-control, self-awareness and sympathy significantly differed with gender such that they were higher among girls than boys.

In the present study, there was no significant statistical relationship between the students' average and their emotional intelligence scores. It seems that students with higher averages use their cognitive intelligence more than emotional intelligence. Shipley et al also stated that students with higher academic scores are more reliant on their cognitive intelligence and those with average GPA depend more on their emotional intelligence.^[17]

It is recommended that further studies should be carried out in order to understand barriers to promotion of emotional intelligence among students. Also, it is suggested that students of other fields of study should be studied and compared with nursing students. In order to obtain more precise results and generalise them to the community of nursing students, future studies need to be carried out on larger samples. Since the questionnaires were filled out by self-report method, students might not have paid sufficient

attention, while answering the questions, which is one of the limitations of the present study.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, there was a correlation between emotional intelligence and some demographic characteristics. Nowadays, educating human resources is the most important component of higher education and the most outstanding factor in national development. Student community is one of the largest groups of the society. Students and particularly nursing students who often deal with clients and patients that require strong support and communications need to be spiritually and mentally prepared, so that they can accept this role with sufficient adequacy and trust. It is essentially important to pay attention to emotional intelligence and communication skills of this group of students in order to promote their scientific and practical capacity and academic achievement. According to the results of the present study, suitable measures need to be taken in order to enhance emotional intelligence among nursing students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present study was retrieved from a research project approved by the Research Council of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services. This project is registered in the Ethics Committee under the ID IR.MUK.REC.1396/145. The authors would like to sincerely thank the honourable research deputy, dear faculty members of the Nursing Department and dear students of Nursing and Midwifery Faculty.

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