

Unveiling Emotional Intelligence: A Descriptive Cross-Sectional Study among First-Year BSc. Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Emotions play an important role in nursing profession and managing emotions requires not only cognitive and technical expertise but also emotional competencies. Nursing students have to adapt to different teaching strategies and new clinical situations. They have to manage conflicts, work in teams and have to undergo stressful situations during exams and in different clinical assignments. Emotional intelligence is an important attribute that helps nursing students to cope with these situations.

Aims: This study was aimed to assess the level of emotional intelligence and its association with selected socio-personal variables among first year BSc nursing students from selected Government Nursing Colleges of Kerala.

Methods: The study was conducted among 161 first year BSc Nursing students selected through simple random sampling during the period 2022-2023. The tools used were socio-personal data sheet and the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: the results of the study revealed that majority (87.58%) of nursing students had average level of emotional intelligence. The mean value of emotional intelligence score was 122.46 ± 8.88 . The chi-square test revealed that there was no significant association between emotional intelligence and selected socio-personal variables of nursing students.

Conclusion: The finding of the study concluded that majority of the nursing students were having average emotional intelligence. The results of the study indicated the need for training on emotional intelligence skills among the nursing students.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Nursing students, socio-personal variables

INTRODUCTION

Nursing stands as a profound and challenging profession, demanding that nurses navigate emotionally charged situations. Right from the outset of their training, nursing students embark on a journey that integrates both clinical and academic components. A fundamental

requirement for these students is the ability to perceive and manage not only their own emotions but also those of others.

Emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses the capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions, leveraging this understanding to adapt to various situations. As defined by Peter Salovey and John

Mayer, EI involves "the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's own thinking and actions."¹ This trait is widely regarded as a significant predictor of academic and clinical success, as well as the retention of students in nursing programs. Should nursing students struggle to manage their own emotions or those arising from patients, their families, or colleagues within the healthcare team, it can lead to burnout, psychosomatic illnesses, increased absenteeism, dropouts, substance abuse, and depression.²

To navigate the challenges inherent in nursing, students must cultivate emotional self-awareness and an understanding of others. They require social and emotional competencies to thrive in the often-chaotic clinical environments they will encounter. Nursing's compassionate nature demands a blend of cognitive, technical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills. Despite its importance, the concept of emotional intelligence is not yet formally integrated into nursing curricula.³

A study investigating the impact of an Emotional Intelligence Program on Nursing Students' Clinical Performance during Community Health Nursing Practical Training at Benha University revealed a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and clinical performance.³ The transformation of nursing students into professional nurses is a universal concern for nursing institutions worldwide. Nurses with high EI tend to exhibit strong interpersonal relationships, leadership qualities, and academic achievements.⁴ Therefore, assessing and enhancing emotional intelligence skills is crucial for the successful transition of student nurses from academic to clinical settings. Assessing emotional intelligence among student nurses highlights the necessity for programs aimed at enhancing EI and incorporating it into nursing education.

Several studies have noted that the majority of nursing students possess average EI, while some demonstrate high EI.⁴ These studies also indicate that nursing students with higher EI tend to utilize integrating, obliging, compromising, and dominating conflict management styles, whereas those with lower EI scores lean towards avoiding conflict management styles.⁴ A study conducted among students at the College of Nursing Ludhiana found a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and empathy among student nurses.⁵ Additionally, nurses with high emotional intelligence report higher work satisfaction, as confirmed by patients, families, and colleagues who have had experiences with such nurses.⁶

Objectives

1. To assess the level of emotional intelligence among first year BSc nursing students of selected nursing colleges in Kerala.
2. To find the association of emotional intelligence with selected socio-personal variables among first year BSc nursing students of selected nursing colleges in Kerala.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Research Approach:

The current study adopted a Quantitative approach with a descriptive cross-sectional survey design.

Study Settings and Participants:

The study was conducted in selected Government Colleges of Nursing in Kerala. The participants consisted of 161 first-year BSc Nursing students chosen through a simple random sampling technique.

Instruments:

Two tools were utilized for data collection. Tool 1 was developed to gather Socio-personal data of the nursing students participating in the study. Tool 2 employed was the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT).

Tool 1: There were 8 variables in the socio-personal profile and they were; Age, Gender, Type of family, Place of living, order of birth, father's education, mother's education and family income. A subsection was also integrated with the Socio-personal profile questionnaire to gather academic data, including the percentage of higher secondary scores, and reasons for selecting the nursing course.

Tool 2: Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT):

SSEIT consists of 33 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total score possible on the SSEIT ranges from 33 to 165. The scale demonstrates high internal consistency, as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, and a test-retest reliability of 0.79. The score ranges for the SSEIT subscales based on the domains are as follows:

- Perception of Emotions (10-50)
- Managing Own Emotions (9-45)
- Managing Others' Emotions (8-40)
- Utilization of Emotions (6-30)

PROCEDURE:

Prior to the commencement of the study, Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC)

clearance (B1/312/2015 CONTSR dated 29/05/2019) was obtained. Additionally, written administrative approval was acquired from the Directorate of Medical Education (DME). Permission was also sought from the principals of the selected nursing colleges, and Gate Keeper consent was obtained from the head of each institution.

First-year BSc Nursing students who consented to participate in the study were recruited based on the established sampling criteria. Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the study details, and written consent was obtained from each participant.

Data Collection:

Following the consent process, socio-personal profiles and emotional intelligence were assessed sequentially from each participant. This methodology ensured a systematic and rigorous approach to data collection, maintaining ethical standards and adherence to established research protocols throughout the study.

RESULT

Section 1: Analysis of the socio-personal data of the participants

Table No: 1- Frequency and percentage of socio-personal data n=161

Socio-personal variables	f	%
Age(in years)		
17	3	1.86
18	77	47.83
19	75	46.58
20	5	3.11
21	1	0.62
Gender		
Male	12	7.45
Female	149	92.55
Type of family		
Nuclear	151	93.79
Joint	10	6.21
Place of living		
Home	10	6.21
Hostel	151	93.79
Order of birth		
1 st	65	40.37
2 nd	74	45.96
3 rd	21	13.04
6 th	1	0.62
Father's Education		
Illiterate	3	1.86
Secondary	85	52.79
Higher secondary	34	21.11
Graduation	21	13.04

Post-graduation	4	2.5
Professional	14	8.7
Mother's Education		
Illiterate	1	0.62
Secondary	55	34.16
Higher secondary	55	34.16
Graduation	27	16.77
Post-graduation	5	3.11
Professional	18	11.18
Income (in Rupees)		
>10000	88	54.66
10000-20000	36	22.36
20000-30000	15	9.32
30000-40000	11	6.83
>50000	11	6.83

The Table No: 1 above depicts the socio-personal characteristics of the participants. Among the participants majority of them were in the age group between 18 and 19. Most among them (92.55%) were females. The significant portion (93.79%) of the sample were hailing from nuclear family and were staying in hostel. 40.37% of them were the first child and 45.97% were the second child in their family. 52.79% have their father's education as secondary and 68.32% mother's had secondary and higher secondary education. The family income of more than half of the students (54.66%) was below Rs.100000. Section 2: Analysis of the academic data - percentage of higher secondary scores and reasons for selecting the nursing course.

Table No: 2 Frequency and percentage of academic data n=161

Academic variables	f	%
HS score (%)		
>90	154	95.65
80 to 89	6	3.73
70 to 79		
<70	1	0.62
Reason for selecting the course		
Service	45	27.95
Job	113	70.19
Parents decision	3	1.86

The data in the Table No: 2 revealed that most (95.65%) of the nursing students had higher secondary scores 90 to 100% and majority (70.19%) of them selected the course due to job opportunity. Section 3: Analysis of level of emotional intelligence among first year BSc nursing students using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test

Table No: 3 Level of emotional intelligence among nursing students n=161

Level of emotional intelligence	Scoring	f	%
Low	Below 111	12	7.45
Average	111-136	141	87.58
High	137-165	8	4.97

The data presented in Table No: 3 shows that the majority (87.58%) of first-year BSc. Nursing students exhibited an average level

of emotional intelligence, while 7.45% of them demonstrated a low level of emotional intelligence.

Table No: 4 Range, mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence of nursing students n=161

Domains	Scoring	Range	Mean	SD
Perception of emotions	10-50	24-45	35.82	3.43
Manage own emotions	9-45	22-42	33.35	3.66
Manage other's emotions	8-40	23-36	30.57	2.93
Utilization of emotions	6-30	16-29	22.72	2.68
Total score	33-165	96-146	122.46	8.88

Table No: 4 illustrates that nursing students achieved a mean score of 35.82 in

perceiving emotions, 33.35 in managing their own emotions, 30.57 in managing

others' emotions, and 22.72 in utilizing emotions. The overall mean total score was found to be 122.46.

Section 4: Association of emotional intelligence with selected socio-personal variables of first year B.Sc. Nursing students

Table No: 5 Association between emotional intelligence score with selected socio-personal variables of nursing students n=161

Sl. No	Socio-personal variables	Emotional Intelligence		Total	χ^2 test
		≤ Median (≤123)	> Median (>123)		
1	Age				$\chi^2=1.023$, df=2, p=0.599 (NS)
	≤ 18 years	43	37	80	
	19 years	41	34	75	
	≥ 20 years	2	4	6	
2	Gender				$\chi^2=0.915$, df=1, p=0.339 (NS)
	Male	8	4	12	
	Female	78	71	149	
3	Type of Family				$\chi^2=0.186$, df=1, p=0.666 (NS)
	Nuclear	80	71	151	
	Joint	6	4	10	
4	Place of living				$\chi^2=1.178$, df=1, p=0.278 (NS)
	Home	7	3	10	
	Hostel	79	72	151	
5	Order of Birth				$\chi^2=2.633$, df=2, p=0.268 (NS)
	1 st	30	35	65	
	2 nd	42	32	74	
	3 rd or above	14	8	22	
6	Father's Education				$\chi^2=9.740$, df=5, p=0.083 (NS)
	Illiterate	0	3	3	
	Secondary	48	37	85	
	Higher secondary	18	16	34	
	Graduation	7	14	21	
	Post-graduation	3	1	4	
	Professional	10	4	14	
7	Mother's Education				$\chi^2=3.378$, df=5, p=0.642 (NS)
	Illiterate	0	1	1	
	Secondary	29	26	55	
	Higher secondary	31	24	55	
	Graduation	14	13	27	
	Post-graduation	4	1	5	
	Professional	8	10	18	
8	Income (in Rupees)				$\chi^2=1.938$, df=4, p=0.747 (NS)
	>10000	48	40	88	
	10000-20000	16	20	36	
	20000-30000	9	6	15	
	30000-40000	6	5	11	
	>50000	7	4	11	

Table 5 demonstrates no significant association between emotional intelligence scores and the selected socio-personal variables.

DISCUSSION

The objectives of the current study were to evaluate the emotional intelligence among first-year BSc Nursing students and investigate its correlation with selected socio-personal variables. Results indicated that the majority (87.58%) of participants exhibited an average level of emotional intelligence, and no significant relationship was found between emotional intelligence and the chosen socio-personal variables.

Numerous studies conducted in Kerala, India, and other countries have echoed the findings of the present study. For instance, a study examining emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing college students in Kerala revealed that over half (52.7%) of the students demonstrated average emotional intelligence.⁷ Similarly, an investigation into emotional intelligence among nursing students at the College of Nursing, JIPMER, Puducherry, found that a majority (62.8%) of students displayed an average level of emotional intelligence. This study also indicated that demographic variables did not exhibit a statistically significant association with the level of

emotional intelligence among nursing students.⁸ Another study conducted at the College of Nursing, CMC, Ludhiana, focusing on the relationship between emotional intelligence and empathy among student nurses, reported similar findings to our study.⁶

A cross-sectional study assessing emotional intelligence in a College of Nursing, Nagpur, found that 41.15% of students had an average level of emotional intelligence, while 46.15% exhibited poor emotional intelligence.⁹ However, a study among first, second, and third-year BSc Nursing students across various nursing colleges yielded different results. The majority of students in that study displayed high emotional intelligence, and similarly, the association analysis aligned with the current study's findings.¹⁰

Additionally, a study on Emotional Intelligence Scores of Diverse First-Year Advanced Practice Nursing Students reported high emotional intelligence components, and no correlation was observed between emotional intelligence and socio-personal variables.¹¹ A cross-sectional study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived stress among nursing students during their clinical training and reported that higher emotional intelligence levels are associated with lower levels of perceived stress among nursing students.¹² A systematic review and meta-analysis to explore the impact of emotional intelligence on academic performance among nursing students found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic success, indicating that higher emotional intelligence levels may contribute to better academic outcomes.¹³ Another cross-sectional study to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and resilience among nursing students. The study found a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and resilience, suggesting that higher emotional intelligence levels may enhance the ability of nursing students to cope with challenges

and stressors.¹⁴ A mixed-methods study to investigate how emotional intelligence affects clinical performance among nursing students. The research suggests that higher emotional intelligence levels are associated with improved clinical performance, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence in nursing education.¹⁵ Another study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction among registered nurses in acute care settings. The findings suggest a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, indicating that higher emotional intelligence levels may contribute to higher job satisfaction among nurses.¹⁶ A longitudinal study to examine the role of emotional intelligence in reducing burnout among nursing students. The study found that higher emotional intelligence levels were associated with lower levels of burnout, highlighting the potential of emotional intelligence training to mitigate burnout in nursing education.¹⁷ These studies collectively highlight the significance of emotional intelligence in nursing education and emphasizing the need for continued exploration and understanding of this important aspect of nursing education to ensure substantial benefits for both students and the quality of care they provide to the patients.

CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to assess the emotional intelligence levels among nursing students, revealing that the majority displayed an average level of emotional intelligence, with no significant relationship observed between emotional intelligence and socio-personal variables. This finding highlights the importance of emotional intelligence as a crucial attribute for nursing students. Training programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence become pivotal in shaping professionally competent nurses.

These results have significant policy implications for nursing education and practice. Firstly, nursing curricula should

incorporate modules or workshops specifically focusing on emotional intelligence development. This can include strategies for recognizing and managing emotions, as well as enhancing empathy and interpersonal skills. By integrating emotional intelligence training into the curriculum, nursing students can be better prepared to navigate the complex emotional landscapes they will encounter in their practice.

Furthermore, institutions should consider ongoing assessments of emotional intelligence throughout the nursing program. This would allow educators to identify students who may benefit from additional support or targeted interventions to improve their emotional intelligence skills. Incorporating emotional intelligence assessments into regular evaluations can contribute to the overall competency and well-being of future nursing professionals.

Looking towards the future, it is essential for nursing educators and policymakers to recognize the significance of emotional intelligence in nursing practice. Continued research in this area can provide valuable insights into effective strategies for enhancing emotional intelligence among nursing students. Additionally, establishing guidelines and standards for emotional intelligence training in nursing programs can ensure that all students receive comprehensive preparation for their roles as compassionate and competent caregivers.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the importance of emotional intelligence in nursing education. By focusing on enhancing emotional intelligence skills, nursing students can develop the necessary tools to navigate the emotional complexities of patient care. Policymakers, educators, and institutions have a crucial role to play in integrating emotional intelligence training into nursing curricula and ensuring that future nurses are well-equipped to provide high-quality and compassionate care.

Declaration by Authors

Ethical Approval: This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles and guidelines. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) [B1/312/2015 CONTSR dated 29/05/2019]. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Confidentiality of participant information was strictly maintained throughout the study. Any identifiable information was kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences. The research was conducted with the utmost respect for the dignity and rights of all participants involved.

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