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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN NURSING

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ABSTRACT

Nurses, nurse managers as well as nursing students experience burn-out and stress and this negatively impacts their performance which in turn results in poor patient outcomes. Emotional intelligence is a significant component which can help nurses and nursing students to achieve better outcomes in personal and professional life. Three models of Emotional intelligence are commonly employed which include Goleman's EI performance model, Bar-On's EI competencies model and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's EI ability model. Emotional intelligence scores of nurses, nurse managers and nursing students vary. High EI scores are associated with reduced burn-out, academic performance, transformational leadership, clinical performance, job satisfaction, positive work environment and better retention. Improving emotional intelligence through training programs and adding it in the nursing curriculum can aid in positive outcomes.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, nursing, nursing students, nurse managers, leadership, academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

Providing high quality care in the fast-changing health-care environment is a big challenge for nurses. A survey among American nurses (ANA,2020) revealed that two-thirds of nurses experienced burn-out. Similar findings were reported among Indian nurses also in various studies (Anchu V, 2021, Kesarwani 2020). Factors associated with high burn-out included value incongruence, low control over the job, low decision latitude, poor social climate/social support, time pressure, high job and psychological demands, low task variety, role conflict, low autonomy (Dall'Ora et al 2020) and working in a team. Review of literature suggests that almost two-thirds of nursing students experience moderate to severe stress (Kalavathi B,2016), (Chaabane, S 2021). Stressors perceived by the students varied globally and included not being able to manage academic work load, clinical assignments (assignments, workload, and patient care) (Chaabane, S 2021). Nurses and nursing students need to be aware of their own emotions and others' emotions and regulate one's own emotions in order to overcome these stressors. Studies among nurses and nursing students have shown that improving the emotional intelligence can improve mental health, quality of care, clinical performance and academic

performance and reduce stress and burn out.

History and origin

Emotional intelligence is comparatively a new concept. Though similar concepts were in use from earlier time onwards. Edward Lee Thorndike (1920) used the word social intelligence to describe the ability to understand and manage men and women and to act wisely in human relations. In 1983, Howard Gardner introduced the concept of multiple intelligences, which has many components, among which are interpersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence which form the foundation for most of the models created on emotional intelligence. It was Wayne Payne, a graduate student in an alternative liberal arts college who used the term Emotional Intelligence in his unpublished dissertation in 1985. Reuven Bar-On, a psychologist, one of the leading thinkers in Emotional Intelligence created a measure of EI in mid-1980s. In 1990, John Meyer and Peter Salovey, psychologists and researchers found that some people are better than others at things like identifying the feelings of others and solving problems involving emotional issues and published their findings in a paper titled “Emotional Intelligence”. David Caruso joined them later and developed the MSCEIT Emotional Intelligence test. It was Daniel Goleman who brought the term Emotional Intelligence to public attention through his book “Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ?” in 1995.

Peter Salovey and John Mayer defines emotional intelligence “as the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions”.

The three major models of emotional intelligence are:

- Goleman’s EI performance model
- Bar-On’s EI competencies model
- Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso’s EI ability model

Goleman’s EI performance model

According to Goleman, EI is a cluster of skills and competencies which are divided into 5 components: self awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

- **Self-awareness:** refers to the capacity to recognize and understand emotions and to have a sense of how one’s actions, moods and the emotions of others take effect. It also involves recognising that what we feel and what we do are interconnected and being aware of one’s strengths and limitations. People with high self-awareness are open to different experiences and new ideas and learning from social interactions.
- **Self-regulation:** managing one’s emotions by being aware of how one’s actions affect others and taking ownership of one’s own actions. People who have high self-regulation ability are open to change, flexible, cope up with change easily, and can manage conflict with ease.
- **Motivation:** intrinsic motivation which means an individual is driven to meet personal needs and goals.
- **Empathy:** refers to being able to understand how other people are feeling.

- **Social skills:** refers to interacting well with other people. It involves applying an understanding of the emotions of ourselves and others to communicate and interact with others on a day-to-day basis. Different social skills include active listening, verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills, leadership, and developing rapport.

Mayer, Salovey, Caruso's EI ability model

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso suggested that emotional intelligence consists of four skill dimensions which are arranged hierarchically: (1) perceiving emotion- to recognize one's own emotion and other's emotion from the non-verbal cues and the verbal cues like facial expressions, gestures, body posture, vocal tone etc.(2) facilitating thought with emotion- ability to use emotions in order to aid thinking and problem-solving(3) understanding emotion- recognising the "why" of emotions (why a person is showing this emotion) and (4) regulation of emotions- ability to manage one's own and others' emotions and to respond appropriately to others' emotions.

Bar-On's Competency model

According to Bar-On, EI is a system of interconnected behaviour that arises from emotional and social competencies. This model of EI consists of five scales: self-perception, intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, and stress management. There are 15 sub-scales which include: self-regard, self-actualization, emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, assertiveness, independence, interpersonal relationships, empathy, social responsibility, problem-solving, reality testing, impulse control, flexibility, stress tolerance and optimism. Emotional intelligence based on this model can be measured using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT).

Some other models of EI include the 9 layered model of emotional intelligence published by Drigas, A. S., & Papoutsis, C (2018). Also relevant is the Tripartite Model-Integrated PAT framework which integrates Ability EI, Trait EI and Information Processing EI to predict EI-related outcomes. Maillefer et al (2018).

Emotional intelligence of Nurse managers, nurses and nursing students

Nurse managers have average level of emotional intelligence (Patricia P ,2017), (Suwaidi, F, 2022). Leadership behaviour, educational level, age, and employee support were variables that increased the EI level. Factors such as executives' styles of solving a conflict and higher levels of burnout of subordinates were variables that decreased the EI level. Nurse managers with more years of experience and had received training on empathy, coping with stress, communication skills, team work etc. had higher levels of EI. (Sakallı, D., & Timuçin, A. (2023), (Prezerakos PE2018). Some of the studies report that high EI is associated with increasing age, study year, and female gender of nursing students (Budler, L. C et al, 2022). whereas some others could not find a connection with these variables. In a study conducted among nursing students of a selected college in India, two-third of the students (65%) had scores<20 in each domain of EI. Of all the components of EI, students scored better for empathy, whereas lowest scores were for social competency. It was found that the variables like sleep, recreation, choice of profession, relationship with teachers and colleagues were significantly associated with EI (Kumar, A 2016). Moderate to high EI scores were reported among Saudi nursing students and there were significant association between EI scores and age of students, gender, year of study, marital status, mother's education, physical and psychological health, and grade point average. Praveen Kumar K et al (2023) and Ravi R et al (2021) Sharma, D. K (2023) reported

that staff nurses working in tertiary care hospital had moderate level of EI. In addition to these demographic variables a significant association was found between emotional intelligence scores of staff nurses and marital status, co-worker relationship and type of family (Sharma, D. K (2023), Devi HR & Rani J A (2020).

Emotional intelligence and leadership

Leaders possessing strong emotional intelligence skills can better understand and respond to the needs of their team members. This develops a sense of trust, respect, and loyalty among team members, creating a positive work environment and boosts productivity. Resilience and leadership success is high among leaders with strong emotional intelligence (Maulding W S et al 2012). Echevarria, I M (2017), Tyczkowski, B (2015) reported a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. Self-awareness and self-regulatory skills in EI enable nurse managers to remain calm through challenging times and thus reduce staff discontent and can lead to the maintenance of a positive unit culture. Nurse managers with high EI had increased job satisfaction, improved staff satisfaction, high-quality patient outcomes, enhanced workload management abilities, reduced turnover and experience less work-related problems. Leaders with high EI are associated with the ability to effectively influence others, actively listen, build relationships, empathize, and communicate clearly. Managers can use various EI models for recruitment, training and development and thus create a more positive and productive work environment. Nurse leaders with high EI have a strong positive impact on the pro-activity and empowerment of the team. Nurse managers with high levels of EI are supported more by their employees and have higher organizational commitment, longer years of work at the organization, and lower burnout levels (Sakallı, D & Timuçin, A 2023).

EI and academia

Academic success of nursing students is significantly related to emotional intelligence (Kumar, A et al 2016), (Beauvais A M 2014), (ALmegewly W H 2022,). Students with high EI have high intrinsic motivation and regulate their emotions enabling them to be more focussed on their goals. They also can recover from setbacks more easily which helps to keep them mentally healthy; preventing them from using poor coping strategies and negative defence mechanisms. Nursing students' problem-solving skills and their emotional intelligence are interconnected. EI training program not only improved student's EI scores but also problem-solving skills of nursing students. (Ragab SM et al 2021). EI plays a significant role in nursing education via communication skills, academic success and retention. (Cleary M et al 2018). Emotional intelligence decreases nursing students' academic stress and improve their professional competence. (Kikanloo A A I et al,2019). Nursing students' emotional empathy and emotional intelligence were significant predictors of the dimensions of higher education-related stress (Jiashuang Xu, 2023). EI enhances the clinical ability of nursing students (Shuangting Dou, 2022). EI can improve sense of coherence and health promoting behavior, thus improving general sense of well-being and motivation of nursing students (Szcześniak, M., & Stochalska, K. 2019).

EI and Nursing Practice

Emotional intelligence is significantly related to nurses' work performance and nurses' work engagement (Turjuman, F, 2023). Nurses with good EI recognize different emotions of their clients and respond to their patients with appropriate emotion. Increased job satisfaction, better decision-

making, higher conflict management skills, high quality patient outcomes are some of the benefits of having a nursing work force with high EI. Nurses with high EI can handle any situations during a specific period of time because they are able to use their interpersonal relationships. Kim MS, Sohn SK (2019) identified that emotional intelligence affects clinical performance. Fostering the EI skills of nurses aids in improving nurses' emotional and physical well-being, as well as contributing positively to patient care outcomes. EI interventions can help participants' coping skills, anxiety levels and stress levels (Saikia, M, 2024). People with higher emotional intelligence are more successful in coping with stress. Emotional intelligence is negatively related with job stress and occupational burnout, whereas significantly and positively related with job satisfaction, work engagement and organizational commitment (Priyanka et al 2019).

Strategies and Techniques to improve Emotional Intelligence

Unlike IQ which is often innate, EQ can be developed. EI can be learnt through workshops, training programs etc. Audrey F et al (2021) reported that the training program for nurse managers was effective in developing the emotional intelligence of nurse managers. Practicing self-reflection, seeking feedback from experts/ mentors, doing mindful meditation, deep breathing exercises, writing a journal to keep track of one's emotional triggers and reactions helps to develop self-awareness. Using the STOPP technique to control your emotions, stop dwelling on negative thoughts, engaging in some activities like exercise or hobbies, overcoming any underlying problems through therapy or coaching etc improves self-regulation skills. Empathy can be developed through active listening without judgment, putting oneself into other's situation and thinking what others are going through and what do they need, developing communication skills such as paraphrasing and open-ended questions. Learning to communicate assertively, practicing negotiation skills, conflict resolution, working in cross-cultural and cross-functional teams as well as taking leadership for various tasks can improve social skills.

CONCLUSION

Emotional intelligence is even more important than IQ when it comes to achieving success in life. Whether in the work place or at personal front, EI plays a significant role. EI helps to increase mental health, reduces stress, build better relationships, promote job satisfaction, makes the work environment better and thus improve staff retention. Organizations committed to developing EI in their work force will achieve better productivity and sustained growth. EI is a useful tool for nurse leaders and contributes decisively to the achievement of effective management in healthcare. EI assist nurse managers in being successful and competent in their positions by giving them tools to navigate the complexities and challenges of the healthcare environment. Organizations need to include EI training in their orientation and CE programs. Nursing students, nurses, nurse managers and nursing faculty should be provided EI training programs which will lead to optimal outcomes at the individual and organizational level.

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