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A study to assess the effective use of emotional intelligence in coping with academic stress among nursing students at selected colleges, Mangaluru

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Abstract

Background: Emotional intelligence is a gate way to a balanced life. It refers to the ability to understand, use and manage one's own emotions in a positive way to relieve stress, communicate effectively, emphasize with others, and overcome challenges. It has a great role in nursing because it helps to deal with the complexities and difficulties of managing and coping with stress arises out of the course of study as well as practice. Due to its complex stressful nature, the students of this profession are facing a great deal of academic stress which in turn reduces their ability to flourish, but with higher emotional intelligence can recognize frustration and stress related emotions effectively and can cope better with stress to balance their life. Therefore the need was felt to assess the effective use of emotional intelligence in coping with academic stress among nursing students.

Methodology: A non-experimental descriptive design was used for this study. Random sampling technique was used to select 120 nursing students. The Tools, Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), Student Nurse Stress Index (S.N.S.I.) and Stress Coping Style Inventory (SCSI) were used to assess the emotional intelligence, academic stress and effective use of EI in coping with academic stress among nursing students.

Results: The mean emotional intelligence score of nursing students was 127.33 ± 13.07 , Mean academic stress score of students was 54.48 ± 13.41 and the mean effective use of EI in coping with Academic stress score was 97.73 ± 11.85 . A strong, positive correlation ($r = +0.886$, $p = 0.01$) was found between EI and effective use of EI in coping with academic stress. While considering the areas of effective use of EI in coping with academic stress, majority of students showed active emotional coping and active problem coping behaviour and also a positive correlation was found between EI and areas associated with Active emotional coping (+ 0.797) and Active problem coping (+0.794) significant at 0.01 level. Significant association was found between effective use of EI in coping with academic stress score and selected demographic variables like Year of study ($p = 0.034$), Gender ($p = 0.023$), Religion ($p = 0.000$), Monthly family income ($p = 0.048$), Education of father ($p = 0.039$), Education of mother ($p = 0.000$), Hours of sleep ($p = 0.000$), Hobbies ($p = 0.000$) and Previous academic score ($p = 0.041$).

Conclusion: Finding of the study showed that, the higher the Emotional Intelligence (EI) level, the higher the effective use of EI in coping with academic stress (Active Emotional Coping). It was found that there was a strong, positive correlation between emotional intelligence and effective use of EI in coping with academic stress. Emotional intelligence is one of the most important factor that aid students in recognizing emotions, comprehending their own and others' emotions, regulating emotions, and coping with academic stress. The findings of the study suggest that, there is a great need to invest resources in the development and training of EI in nursing education programs, in order to improve effective use of EI in coping with academic stress among nursing students for the betterment of both personal and professional life.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, academic stress, effective use of ei in coping with academic stress, nursing students

Introduction

“Magic comes alive when intelligence combines with emotions”

Daniel Goleman

Emotions are part of being human, but emotional intelligence is the heart of being human. Emotional intelligence combines emotions and intelligence by viewing emotions as useful sources of information that help one to make sense of and navigate the social environment. Emotional intelligence is a gate way for balanced life. It affects our attitudes and outlook on both personal and professional life.

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It refers to the Ability to understand, use and manage one's own emotions in a positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, emphasize with others, and overcome challenges ^[1].

Nursing is 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 Emotional intelligence (EI). In addition, EI is proclaimed as a powerful determinant in decision making skills ^[2]. 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 ^[3].

Stress is a part of life, and not necessarily a complete negative part, it is clear that too much stress can take toll on physical and psychological health. Stress refers to a feeling of physical, mental or emotional tension. It can arise from any event thoughts that makes frustrated, angry on demand. Short bursts, stress is positive that helps to avoid danger for meet a deadline. But when it lasts for long and don't realize it becomes a problem. Stress is explained as the strain that accompanies the demands perceived to be challenging (positive) or threatening (negative) and also depending on the appraisal, may be either adaptive or debilitating. One of the major professionals frequently suffer from stress is health professional ^[4].

Students of health care profession mainly facing the stress associated with academic issues, exam stress and adjusting with a new environment which is totally indifferent to them. Academic stress is defined as that generated by the proper demands in an academic context along with an individual recognition about spending sufficient time to achieve that context ^[5].

In the current competitive environment where students are expected to perform multi roles with efficiency and effectiveness. The challenges and demands in nursing curriculum also be very stressful for nursing students. It was identified that emotional intelligence of an individual, plays vital role in coping well with academic stress ^[6].

Objectives

1. To assess the level of emotional intelligence among nursing students
2. To assess the level of academic stress among nursing student
3. To assess the level of effective use of emotional intelligence in coping with academic stress among nursing students
4. To find the correlation between emotional intelligence and effective use of emotional intelligence in coping with academic stress among nursing students.
5. To determine the association of effective use of emotional intelligence with selected demographic variables among nursing students

Hypothesis

- **H₁:** There will be a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and effective use of emotional intelligence in coping with academic stress among nursing students.
- **H₂:** There will be a significant association of effective use of emotional intelligence in coping with academic stress with selected demographic variables.

Methodology

Research Approach: Quantitative Research Approach

Research Design: Non experimental descriptive design

Sampling technique: Random sampling Sampling Technique

Sample size: 120 Nursing students

Setting of study: Selected Colleges of Nursing, Mangalore district

Tool used for data collection: Following tools used for the data collection

- **Part I: Demographic data:** It consists of 17 items related to demographic data of participants
- **Part II: Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT).** It consist of 33 items questionnaire with each item being rated on a 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The maximum possible score is **165** and it is interpreted as low (33-110), average (111-137) and high (138-165) level EI.
- **Part III: Student Nurse Stress Index (S.N.S.I.)** It is developed by Martyn Jones, consists of 22 items with maximum score 110 and is interpreted as mild (22-51) moderate (52-81) and severe (82-110) stress.
- **Part IV: Stress Coping Style Inventory (SCSI)**

The Stress Coping Style Inventory (SCSI) is a standardized tool developed by Ying Ming Lin & Farn Shing Chen, and is divided into four factors, with a total of 28 questions, each item being rated on a 5-point Likert type scale The maximum possible scores is 140 and it is interpreted as follows.

Procedure of data collection

A formal written permission was obtained by the investigator from the concerned authorities before the data collection from 120 B Sc nursing students who met inclusion criteria. The investigator explained about the need and important of the study and written consent was taken from the participants and assured the confidentiality. Then the tool was administered and the average time taken was 30 minutes.

Results

Section-I: Frequency and percentage distribution of nursing students according to their demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of nursing students according to their demographic characteristics n=120

| Characteristics | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Year of study | | |
| First year B Sc Nursing | 60 | 50 |
| Second year B Sc Nursing | 60 | 50 |
| Age (in years) | | |
| 17-18 | 32 | 26.7 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------|
| 19-20 | 76 | 63.3 |
| Above 20 | 12 | 10 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 11 | 9.2 |
| Female | 109 | 90.8 |
| Birth order | | |
| First | 60 | 50 |
| Second | 51 | 42.5 |
| Third | 4 | 3.3 |
| Fourth and above | 5 | 4.2 |
| No. of siblings | | |
| Nil | 74 | 61.7 |
| One | 38 | 31.7 |
| Two | 7 | 5.8 |
| Three and above | 1 | 0.8 |
| Birth place | | |
| Urban | 42 | 35 |
| Rural | 78 | 65 |
| Type of family | | |
| Nuclear | 97 | 80.8 |
| Joint | 21 | 17.5 |
| Extended | 2 | 1.7 |
| Religion | | |
| Hindu | 38 | 31.7 |
| Christian | 54 | 45 |
| Muslim | 28 | 23.3 |
| Any other | - | |
| Family income per month | | |
| <15,000 | 48 | 40 |
| 15,000 – 25,000 | 49 | 40.8 |
| >25,000 | 23 | 19.2 |
| Education of father | | |
| Primary | 11 | 9.2 |
| Secondary | 53 | 44.2 |
| PUC | 37 | 30.8 |
| Graduate and above | 19 | 15.8 |
| Education of mother | | |
| Primary | 13 | 10.8 |
| Secondary | 41 | 34.2 |
| PUC | 41 | 34.2 |
| Graduate and above | 25 | 20.8 |
| Occupation of father | | |
| Professional | 18 | 15 |
| Skilled worker | 45 | 37.5 |
| Unskilled worker | 52 | 43.3 |
| Unemployed | 5 | 4.2 |
| Occupation of mother | | |
| Professional | 19 | 15.8 |
| Skilled worker | 13 | 10.8 |
| Professional | 19 | 15.8 |
| Skilled worker | 13 | 10.8 |
| Unskilled worker | 8 | 6.7 |
| Home maker | 80 | 66.7 |
| Hours of sleep at night | | |
| <6 hrs. | 15 | 12.5 |
| 6-8 hrs | 83 | 69.2 |
| >8 hrs | 22 | 18.3 |
| Hobbies | | |
| Yes | 83 | 69.2 |
| No | 37 | 30.8 |
| Hours of study at home | | |
| <2 hrs. | 21 | 17.5 |
| 2 – 4 hrs. | 93 | 77.5 |
| >4 hrs. | 6 | 5 |
| Previous academic score (PUC) | | |
| >75% | 44 | 36.7 |
| 65-75% | 67 | 55.8 |
| <65% | 9 | 7.5 |

Section II: Level of EI, AS and Effective use of EI in coping with AS analyzed in terms of frequency, percentage distribution.

Table 2: Frequency, Percentage distribution and level of EI n=120

| EI level | EI Score | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|----------|----------|---------------|----------------|
| Low | < 111 | 7 | 5.8 |
| Average | 111-137 | 96 | 80 |
| High | 138-165 | 17 | 14.2 |

Maximum score 165

The data depicted in table 2 (figure 1) shows that overall emotional intelligence level of nursing students. Majority of the students 96 (80%) were having average level of emotional intelligence and 17(14.2%) of the students experiencing high level of emotional intelligence and only 7(5.8%) were having low level Emotional Intelligence.

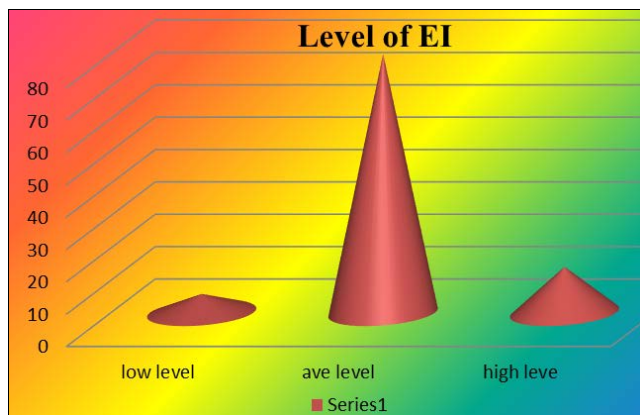


Fig 1: Cone diagram showing the levels of EI score

Table 3: Frequency, Percentage distribution and level of AS n=120

| Academic Stress level | Academic Stress Score | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Mild | 22-51 | 19 | 15.8 |
| Moderate | 52-81 | 94 | 78.3 |
| Severe | 82-110 | 7 | 5.8 |

Maximum score 110

The data depicted in the above Table 3 shows that overall academic stress score of student nurses. Majority of the students 94 (78.3%) of the students experience moderate level of academic stress and 19(15.8%) of the students experience mild level of academic stress and only 7(5.8%) are having severe stress level.

Table 4: Frequency, Percentage distribution and level of effective use of EI in coping with academic stress n = 120

| Effective use of EI in coping level | Effective use of EI in coping Score | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Low | <70 | 6 | 5 |
| Average | 70-105 | 91 | 75.8 |
| High | > 105 | 23 | 19.2 |

Maximum Score 140

The data depicted in Table (4) showed the overall effective use of EI in coping with academic stress level of nursing

students. Majority of the students 91 (75.8%) having average level of effective use of EI in coping with academic stress and 23(19.2%) of the students experiencing high level of coping and only 6 (5%) having low level of effective use of EI in coping with academic stress. (Figure 2)

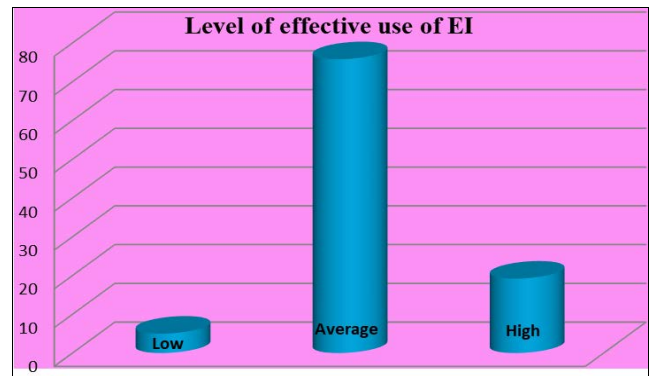


Fig 2: Cylindrical diagram showing distribution of samples according to their Effective use of EI in coping with AS

Table 5: Minimum, maximum mean, mean (%)and standard deviation scores of EI, AS and Effective use of EI in coping with AS n=120

| Aspects | Min. | Max. | Mean | Mean% | SD |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|--------|-------|-------|
| Emotional Intelligence | 74 | 149 | 127.33 | 77.17 | 13.07 |
| Academic Stress | 33 | 80 | 54.48 | 49.52 | 13.41 |
| Effective use of EI in coping with AS | 52 | 122 | 97.73 | 69.80 | 11.85 |

The data depicted in Table (5) depicts the overall mean emotional intelligence scores, Academic stress and Effective use of EI in coping with AS scores of students. It was found that the mean emotional intelligence scores of students 127.33 ± 13.07 . Mean academic stress score of students 54.48 ± 13.41 and the mean effective use of EI in coping with academic stress score 97.733 ± 11.85 .

Area wise Effective use of EI in coping with Academic stress scores analyzed in terms of mean and standard deviation

Table 6: Area wise mean and standard deviation scores of effective use of EI in coping with academic stress among nursing students

| Areas | Max. possible score | Mean | SD |
|--------------------------|---------------------|-------|------|
| Active emotional coping | 40 | 34.40 | 5.95 |
| Passive emotional coping | 30 | 18.01 | 2.33 |
| Active problem coping | 30 | 24.22 | 4.78 |
| Passive problem coping | 40 | 21.11 | 2.92 |

n=120

Total Score=140

The data depicted in Table (6) shows that the mean active emotional coping scores of nursing students 34.40 ± 5.95 , passive emotional coping score 18.008 ± 2.35 , active problem coping score 24.216 ± 4.78 and passive problem coping score of nursing students were 21.108 ± 2.92 .

Section III: Correlation between EI and effective use of EI in coping with academic stress among nursing students

Table 7: Correlation between the emotional intelligence score and effective use of EI in coping with academic stress score among nursing students n=120

| Aspects | Max. Score | Correlation coefficient (r) | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-------|-----------|
| | | Mean | SD | p value |
| Emotional intelligence (Total) | 165 | 127.32 | 13.07 | + 0.886** |
| Academic stress Coping (Total) | 140 | 97.73 | 11.83 | |
| EI and Active Emotional Coping | 40 | 34.40 | 5.93 | +0.797** |
| EI and Passive Emotional Coping | 30 | 18.01 | 2.33 | +0.501** |
| EI and Active Problem Coping | 30 | 24.22 | 4.78 | +0.794** |
| EI and Passive Problem Coping | 40 | 21.11 | 2.94 | +0.270** |

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels.

From the above table it is evidenced that the mean emotional intelligence score of nursing students are found to be 127.33, and the mean academic stress coping score is found to be 97.733. The coefficient of correlation ‘r’ is found to be +0.886 significant at 0.01 level. So the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is accepted which states that there exists a significant positive correlation between the emotional intelligence and effective use of EI in coping with academic stress among nursing students. Also area wise coefficient of correlation ‘r’ is found to be + 0.797 (Active emotional coping), +0.501 (Passive emotional coping), +0.794 (Active problem

coping), +0.270 (Passive problem coping) significant at 0.01 level. Majority students showed active emotional coping and active problem coping behavior; however, a strong, positive correlation between emotional intelligence and effective use of EI in coping with academic stress was found for areas associated with Active Emotional and Active problem coping ($\alpha < 0.01$). So the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is accepted.

Section IV: Association of effective use of EI in coping with AS with selected demographic variables among nursing students

Table 8: Association of effective use of EI in coping with AS with selected demographic variable n=120

| Variables | ≤Median (≤101) | >median (>101) | χ^2 | p value | Inference |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------|---------|-----------|
| Year of study | | | | | |
| First year B Sc Nursing | 35 | 25 | 4.034 | 0.034 | S |
| second year B Sc Nursing | 24 | 36 | | | |
| Age (in years) | | | | | |
| 17 - 18 | 16 | 16 | 0.511 | 0.775 | NS |
| 19- 20 | 36 | 40 | | | |
| above 20 | 7 | 5 | | | |
| Gender | | | | | |
| Male | 9 | 2 | 5.166 | 0.023 | S |
| Female | 50 | 59 | | | |
| Birth order | | | | | |
| First | 30 | 30 | 1.187 (F) | 0.756 | NS |
| Second | 25 | 26 | | | |
| Third | 1 | 3 | | | |
| Fourth and above | 3 | 2 | | | |
| No. of siblings | | | | | |
| Nil | 34 | 40 | 2.544 (F) | 0.467 | NS |
| One | 22 | 16 | | | |
| Two | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Three and above | 0 | 1 | | | |
| Birth place | | | | | |
| Urban | 22 | 20 | 1.197 | 0.550 | NS |
| Rural | 37 | 41 | | | |
| Type of family | | | | | |
| Nuclear family | 46 | 51 | 2.273 (F) | 0.231 | NS |
| Joint family | 11 | 10 | | | |
| Extended family | 2 | 0 | | | |
| Religion | | | | | |
| Hindu | 26 | 12 | 18.082 (F) | 0.000 | S |
| Christian | 15 | 39 | | | |
| Muslim | 18 | 10 | | | |
| Any other | 0 | 0 | | | |
| Family income per month | | | | | |
| <15000 | 26 | 22 | 6.073 | 0.048 | S |
| 15000-25000 | 27 | 22 | | | |
| >25000 | 6 | 17 | | | |
| Education of father | | | | | |
| Primary | 8 | 3 | 8.356 | 0.039 | S |
| Secondary | 31 | 22 | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|----|--------|-------|----|
| PUC | 13 | 24 | | | |
| Graduate and above | 7 | 12 | | | |
| Education of mother | | | | | |
| Primary | 11 | 2 | 21.473 | 0.000 | S |
| Secondary | 23 | 18 | | | |
| PUC | 22 | 19 | | | |
| Graduate and above | 3 | 22 | | | |
| Occupation of father | | | | | |
| Professional | 11 | 7 | 1.771 | 0.621 | NS |
| Skilled worker | 22 | 23 | | | |
| Unskilled worker | 23 | 29 | | | |
| Unemployed | 3 | 2 | | | |
| Occupation of mother | | | | | |
| Professional | 9 | 10 | 0.912 | 0.823 | NS |
| Skilled worker | 8 | 5 | | | |
| Unskilled worker | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Home maker | 38 | 42 | | | |
| Hours of sleep at night | | | | | |
| < 6 hrs | 11 | 4 | 22.879 | 0.000 | S |
| 6- 8 hrs | 47 | 36 | | | |
| >8hrs | 1 | 21 | | | |
| Hobbies | | | | | |
| Yes | 30 | 53 | 18.264 | 0.000 | S |
| No | 29 | 8 | | | |
| Hours of study at home | | | | | |
| < 2 hrs | 11 | 10 | 0.950 | 0.622 | NS |
| 2-4 hrs | 44 | 49 | | | |
| >4hrs | 4 | 2 | | | |
| previous academic score (PUC) | | | | | |
| > 75% | 19 | 25 | 6.365 | 0.041 | S |
| 65% - 75% | 32 | 35 | | | |
| < 65% | 8 | 1 | | | |

S = Significant NS=Not significant

Table (8) shows the association of effective use of EI in coping with academic stress with selected demographic variables such as Years of study, Age, Gender, Birth order, Number of siblings, Birth place, Type of Family, Religion, Income, Education of parents, Occupation of parents, Hours of sleep, Hobbies, Hours of study, Previous academic score (PUC). Among these a significant association was found with Year of study ($\chi^2=4.034$), Gender ($\chi^2=5.166$), Religion ($\chi^2= 18.082$), Monthly family income ($\chi^2=6.073$), Education of father ($\chi^2=8.356$), Education of mother ($\chi^2= 21.473$), Hours of sleep ($\chi^2= 22.879$), Hobbies ($\chi^2=18.264$) and Previous academic score ($\chi^2= 6.365$) at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion

The future of the country lays in the hands of today's students. Because students and young people are going to rule the country tomorrow. In fact, at present, students are facing very high level academic stress. Every year about 25,000 students between 18-20 years commit suicides because of examination and other academic stress. Nursing students have many difficulties to achieve their academic goals.⁵¹They are working lot more than studies to achieve their goals. Emotional intelligence is one of the most important factor that aid students in recognizing emotions, comprehending their own and others' emotions, regulating emotions, and coping with academic stress. So it is time to understand the effective use of emotional intelligence in coping with academic stress.

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