

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG NURSING STUDENTS IN NEPAL**¹, ***Babita Singh** and ²**Dr. Dorwin Das**¹Ph.D Scholar, Psychiatric Nursing, Mansarovar Global University, Bhopal (M.P) India²Head of Department Medical and Surgical Nursing, Bombay Hospital College of Nursing, Indore, India**Received 26th December 2023; Accepted 30th January 2024; Published online 29th February 2024**

Abstract

Introduction: Emotional Intelligence includes a set of skills and qualities that allow individuals to pilot social situations, form healthy relations, and make sound decisions based on emotional awareness. For providing compassionate care, nurses must be able to identify, use, manage and understand emotions not only in themselves but also in others. **Objective:** To assess the level of emotional intelligence among nursing students and to measure the association of emotional intelligence with selected demographic variables. **Methods:** A descriptive cross sectional, questionnaire-based survey was carried out among 240 nursing students enrolled in final year at private nursing campuses of province 2 in Nepal. The data was collected using Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). Both descriptive (frequency, percentage) and inferential statistics (Chi-square test) were used to analyze data in SPSS vs20. **Results:** The findings of the study revealed, the age of participants ranged from 18 years to 31 years with mean age \pm SD being 20.47 \pm 2.043. Most of the participants, 88.3% were single, 52.2% resided in college hostel, 38.3% respondents' father educational status were higher secondary and above, 35.4% and 72.9% of participants' mother were illiterate and home maker respectively. Similarly, majority of the Participants 62.1% had low level of Emotional intelligence, 32.9% had average level of emotional intelligence and only few 5.0% of participants were having high level of emotional intelligence. Likewise, the findings also showed that there was significant association between level of emotional intelligence and age ($p=0.012$, $p<0.05$) of the participants. Similarly, there was no significant association of level of emotional intelligence with other demographic characteristics. **Conclusion:** The study findings reveal a significant proportion of participating nursing students had low levels of Emotional Intelligence from Nepal which indicates that students need to develop their emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the findings suggest that there was significant association between nursing students' Emotional intelligence level and age. So, to increase the level of emotional intelligence educational workshops, education program and seminar need to be conducted regularly for the nursing students focusing on how to develop and improve emotional intelligence skills to work with patients in different clinical settings thereby enhancing their quality of life.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Nursing students, Nepal.

INTRODUCTION

Student life is a dynamic and diverse phase in one's educational journey, characterized by a multitude of experiences and challenges.¹ Nevertheless, this phase is also a time of profound personal growth and self-discovery, where individuals explore their interests, values, and beliefs, ultimately shaping their identities and aspirations.² Emotions are significant in the growth of individual's personal and professional lives, so much that they are crucial than even our actual measure of intelligence. The tools and technology help us to gather and master information, nothing can exchange our ability to learn, manage and master emotions of ourselves and others.³ Comprehending complex concepts, reasoning, planning, abstract problem solving, learning quickly, and experience-based learning are only a handful of the other mental skills that comprise intelligence. According to Thorndike (1913), intelligence is "the capacity to make wise decisions from the perspective of truth or fact."⁴ Emotional quotient (EQ), another name for emotional intelligence (EI), is the ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize one's own emotions as well as those of others. It includes a set of skills and qualities that allow individuals to pilot social situations, form healthy relations, and make sound decisions based on emotional awareness.⁵ Emotional Intelligence is vital in nursing, where compassion and caring are touchstones of the profession.

For providing compassionate care, nurses must be able to identify, use, manage and understand emotions not only in themselves but also in others.⁶ Nursing students face burnout situations during their academics, so emotional intelligence will help them to cope personally and professionally. During the academic period they are competent in nursing skills but when it comes to actual practice in hospital setting, they find it difficult in applying social skills. Emotional intelligence will help them to balance the professional and personal efficacy by having self-awareness.⁷ Study conducted in Nepal showed that about 46% of the students were normal and only few students 15% had a high level of emotional intelligence (EI).⁸ Likewise, the overall emotional intelligence was not good and students are not aware of themselves, their emotions, strengths and weaknesses.³ There has been relatively little research done regarding Emotional intelligence among health care professionals, nurses, and particularly nursing students. So, this study aims to assess the emotional intelligence among nursing students of province 2 Nepal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out among nursing students currently enrolled and studying Proficiency in Certificate Level (PCL) nursing final year at six private nursing campuses of province 2, Nepal selected by cluster random sampling method and who were available during the data collection period in the study sites. The sample size for the study was

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calculated using G*Power software with the following assumptions: level of emotional intelligence among nursing students being 50 %, a 5 % margin of error, 95 %confidence level, power of design being 80%, the minimum sample size was 235. However, all the nursing students of the selected private campuses were sought for data collection. Ethical approval was obtained from ethical review board of Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) (Ref.1690), Nepal to conduct the study. Written informed consent was taken from the study participants prior to administration of the questionnaire among them. Data were collected from March 2023 to June 2023 by using self-administered structured questionnaire which consisted of two parts, prepared after review of relevant literatures.

Part I: This part consisted of information related to socio-demographic factors like age, religion, area of residence, monthly family income, type of family, father's educational status, father occupation, mother's educational status and mother's occupation.

Part II: consisted of Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), which is a standard and valid tool adopted to assess the emotional intelligence level of nursing students. It was originally developed by Salovey and Mayer 1990 and was modified by Schutte *et al.*, 1998. Invalidation studies, the test demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90) and acceptable test-retest reliability (0.73) as well as excellent construct, predictive, and discriminant validity. Adopted tool was permitted free to use for research and clinical purposes by authors.⁹

The scale consisted of 33 items, which were rated on a five-point Likert scale that ranges from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree". There were three negative statements (5, 28, and33) which were scored reversely. The total SSEIT score ranged from 33 to 165. The 33-item was based in four subscales: perception of emotions= 10 items; managing own emotions= 9 items; managing other's emotions= 8items; and utilization of emotions= 6 items. The emotional intelligence score was categorized as Low emotional intelligence (≤ 111) Average emotional intelligence (111-137) and High emotional intelligence (≥ 137).^{7, 10} The collected data were entered, cleaned and analyzed in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version20. Descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage was used to analyze the data and association of emotional intelligence level with socio-demographic characteristics was assessed by using Chi-square test.

RESULTS

The age of participants ranged from 18 years to 31 years with mean age \pm SD being 20.47 \pm 2.043. Most of the participants, 91.3% followed Hinduism religion, 88.3% were single, 52.2% resided in college hostel, 66.7% were from nuclear family, 38.3% respondents' father educational status were higher secondary and above, 35.4% and 72.9% of participants' mother were illiterate and home maker respectively. (Table 1) As presented in Table 2, majority of the respondents 149 (62.1%) had low level of Emotional intelligence, 79 (32.9%) had average level of emotional intelligence and only few 12(5.0%)of respondents were having high level of emotional intelligence.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics

		n=240	
Characteristics	Category	Number	Percent
Age (in years)	< 20	162	67.5
	20 or more	78	32.5
	Mean age \pm SD; Range	20.47 \pm 2.043; 18-31	
Religion	Hinduism	219	91.3
	Islam	10	4.2
	Buddhism	11	4.6
Marital Status	Unmarried	212	88.3
	Married	28	11.7
Type of family	Nuclear	160	66.7
	Joint	80	33.3
Monthly family income (NRs)	Less than 10000	32	13.3
	10001-20000	61	25.4
	20001-30000	65	27.1
	More than 30000	82	34.2
Present residence	Home/with Family	71	29.6
	College Hostel	130	54.2
	Paying guest/on rent	39	16.3
Education status of father	Illiterate	17	7.1
	Primary	40	16.7
	Secondary	91	37.9
	Higher secondary and above	92	38.3
Education status of mother	Illiterate	85	35.4
	Primary	55	22.9
	Secondary	76	31.7
	Higher secondary and above	24	10.0
Occupation of father	Service	51	21.3
	Business	82	34.2
	Agriculture	72	30.0
	Others	35	14.6
Occupation of mother	Service	22	9.2
	Business	17	7.1
	Agriculture	26	10.8
	Homemaker	175	72.9

Table 2. Respondents' Emotional Intelligence Score

n=240		
Level of Emotional Intelligence	Number	Percent
Low (<111)	149	62.1
Average (111-137)	79	32.9
High (>137)	12	5.0

Data presented in Table 3 showed that there was significant association between level of emotional intelligence and age ($p=0.012$, $p<0.05$) of the respondents. Similarly, there was no significant association of level of emotional intelligence with other demographic characteristics of respondents.

Table 3. Association of level of emotional intelligence with Socio-demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Category Frequency	Level of emotional intelligence			P value
			n=240			
			Low F (%)	Moderate F (%)	High F (%)	
Age (in years)	< 20	162	111 (68.5)	44(27.2)	7(4.3)	0.012*
	20 or more	78	38 (48.7)	35 (44.9)	5 (6.4)	
Religion	Hinduism	219	137 (62.5)	70 (32.0)	12 (5.5)	0.522
	Others	21	12 (57.1)	9 (42.9)	0 (0.0)	
Marital Status	Unmarried	212	133(62.7)	69 (32.6)	10 (4.7)	0.690
	Married	28	16 (57.2)	10 (35.7)	2 (7.1)	
Type of family	Nuclear	160	100 (62.5)	51 (31.9)	9 (5.6)	0.842
	Joint	80	49 (61.3)	28 (35.0)	3 (3.7)	
Monthly family income (NRs)	≤20000	93	49 (52.7)	38 (40.9)	6 (6.4)	0.05
	More than 20000	147	100 (68.0)	41 (27.9)	6 (4.1)	
Area of present residence	Home/with Family	71	44(62.0)	22 (31.0)	5 (7.0)	0.355
	College Hostel	130	78 (60.0)	48 (36.9)	4 (3.1)	
	Paying guest/on rent	39	27 (69.2)	9 (23.1)	2 (5.7)	
Education status of father	Illiterate	17	10 (58.8)	6 (35.3)	1 (5.9)	1.000
	Literate	223	139 (62.3)	73 (32.7)	11 (5.0)	
Education status of mother	Illiterate	85	48 (56.5)	31 (36.5)	6 (7.1)	0.313
	Literate	155	101 (65.2)	48 (31.0)	6 (3.9)	
Occupation of father	Service	84	48 (57.1)	30 (35.7)	6 (7.2)	0.640
	Business	57	35 (61.4)	20 (35.1)	2 (3.5)	
	Others	99	66 (66.7)	29 (29.3)	4 (4.0)	
Occupation of mother	Homemaker	175	113 (64.6)	55 (57.6)	7 (8.8)	0.276
	Others	65	36 (55.4)	24 (36.9)	5 (7.7)	

*p value significant at 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

Of the total 240 participants, the findings revealed that age ranges from 18 to 31 years with their mean age being 20.47 \pm 2.043 SD. Most of the participants', 91.3% followed Hinduism religion, majority 88.3% were single, more than half 52.2% resided in college hostel, majority 66.7% were from nuclear family, 38.3% participants' father educational status was higher secondary and above, 35.4% and 72.9% of participants' mother were illiterate and home maker respectively. Overall, it was observed that majority of the participants 62.1% had low level of Emotional intelligence, 32.9% had average level of emotional intelligence and only few 5.0% of respondents were having high level of emotional intelligence. The study findings are in congruent with the study findings of Ghorpade et al⁷ which showed that most of nursing students 53.3% had low emotional intelligence, 40% had average level and only few 6.6% students had high emotional intelligence level. The study findings are also in same line with the study findings of Joshi et al³ which showed that most of the respondents had average to low level of emotional intelligence. Similarly, the finding of the present study is consistent with the findings of the study which showed that only few 11.4% of the studied students had high levels of emotional intelligence.¹¹ Whereas study conducted by Sinha et al.⁸ showed that about 46% of the students had normal and very less 15% had high level of emotional intelligence.

The present study also showed similar findings on a study conducted by Faye A et al¹² in India where 70% of the post-graduate medical students had low EI scores. The finding of the present study showed contradictory findings on a study conducted by Shrestha M et al¹³ in Nepal which revealed that most of the respondents 81.8% had high level of emotional intelligence; Also inconsistent with the findings of the study conducted in Iran which showed mean EI score 109.09 indicating high level of EI.¹⁴ Similarly, the finding of the present study is dissimilar with the findings of the study which showed that more than half of the studied students had moderate levels of emotional intelligence.¹¹ The present study findings are also inconsistent with the study findings of Pradhan U et al¹⁴ which showed that 75.4% of nursing students had a total high level of Emotional Intelligence score. The present study was contradictory to the findings of the study conducted among Saudi nursing students¹⁶ as none of the nursing students had a low level of emotional intelligence. Various studies showed Intermediate or moderate level of Emotional intelligence in the most of the samples in a study in Malaysia¹⁷, Turkey¹⁸, and Mahmoud in Egypt¹⁹, The variation in the findings may be related to the age differences between the studies. The mean age of the students in the present study being lower than the compared study group. Also, the reasons for these variations could be the heterogeneity of the subject population, difference in diagnostic methodology, the influence of confounding factors and differences in social,

cultural and technological factors. The present study findings showed that there was significant association between the EI score with age of the respondents. This finding is supported by the study findings¹¹ which indicated a positive significant relation between students' age, and student's emotional intelligence ($P=0.001$), this finding is also consistent with the findings of a study by Goleman (2004)²⁰ who confirmed that level of emotional intelligence increases with the age. The present study findings also revealed that there was no significant association of other demographic characteristics like marital status, family type, present residence, family income, parental education and parental occupation with emotional intelligence score. This finding is same line with the study findings of Shrestha M et al¹³, Pradhan U et al¹⁵, Sinha B et al⁸; which showed that there was no significant association of emotional intelligence score with marital status, family type, family income, parental education and parental occupation. These finding was also similar to the findings of a study among Turkish clinical nurses conducted by Kahraman N et al.²¹

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that the majority of participating nursing students had low levels of Emotional Intelligence from Nepal which indicates that students need to develop their emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the findings suggest that there was significant association between nursing student's Emotional intelligence and their age. And it also revealed that there was no any association of emotional intelligence with other demographic characteristics. Integrating emotional intelligence education into nursing curricula may enhance emotional intelligence skills among nursing students to work with patients in different clinical settings. Educational workshops should be conducted regularly for the nursing students focusing on how to develop and improve emotional intelligence skills. Further research is necessary to evaluate the effect of implementation programs to develop emotional intelligence skills.

Conflict of Interest: None

Acknowledgement: We thank Ethical Review Board of Nepal Health Research Council for giving permission to carry out this research. We express our deep gratitude to all the nursing students who participated in this research.

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