

ORIGINAL PAPER

Levels of Emotional Intelligence of Nursing Students

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Abstract

Background: Emotional intelligence is described as the ability to understand one's own emotions, to show empathy towards others' emotions and to organize one's emotions in a way to enrich his life

Objective of this study was determined levels of emotional intelligence of Nursing School Students of Health School.

Methodology: The present study was descriptively conducted with 183 nursing school students. The data were collected using questionnaire form and Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale. The analyses of the data were performed using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, Descriptive Statistics, Shapiro-Wilk test, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis Variance Analysis.

Results: As the result of the research, students' mean score of Emotional Intelligence Assessment Scale was found to be at a normal level. Students' mean score for emotional management, self-motivation, empathy and social skill sub-dimensions were found to be normal whereas mean score for emotional awareness sub-dimension was low. There was statistically significant difference between grades and emotional awareness, marital status and social skill, financial status and self-motivation training provided before nursing-school and empathy, satisfaction with studying at nursing school and self-motivation, training provided about emotional intelligence and self-motivation stress management training and empathy, reading books about emotional intelligence and self-motivation, reading personal development books emotional awareness and empathy, status of want to take the stress management training and empathy sub-dimensions ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions: In light of these findings, it is recommended that trainings and studies be conducted in order to improve levels of emotional intelligence of the students.

Key Words: Emotional intelligence, nursing, student.

Introduction

One of the factors that affect the development of communication skill is known to be intelligence. Lately, theory of multiple intelligences has been accepted and it is often emphasized that not only cognitive intelligence but also emotional intelligence should be possessed for the development of communicational skills (Yeşilyaprak, 2001). Emotional intelligence is described as the ability to understand one's own emotions, to show empathy towards others' emotions and to organize one's emotions in a way to enrich his life (Goleman, 1998).

The importance of emotional intelligence has recently been highlighted in nursing. Although no so much importance was given to the concept of

emotional intelligence in the past, it has always been emphasized that such emotional intelligence elements as awareness of one's own feelings, management of emotions, self-motivation, empathy and social skills are important in developing effective interpersonal relations (Velioğlu, 1999; Tutuk, Al & Doğan, 2002; Akbaş, 2007; Kumcağız et al. 2011; Karayurt & Akyol 2008)

When the studies that investigated emotional intelligence level of the nursing students were examined it was found out that they had a moderate level of emotional intelligence (Kaya & Keçeci, 2004; Yılmaz & Özkan, 2011). In this regard, the study is important in the sense of determining emotional intelligence levels and the

affecting factors of the nursing students. Also; we are of the opinion that the study will contribute to the literature because it will shed light on which level and when the training of emotional intelligence should be conducted.

Study Aim

This study was descriptively conducted in order to determine emotional intelligence levels and the affecting factors of the students of the Health School of Bozok University (BUHS).

Method

Place where the study was conducted and its characteristics

The study was conducted at the BUHS. The education duration of the health school is four years and the students who graduate from the school acquire "nurse" title. During the 2010-2011 academic year, there were 213 students who studied at the BUHS (<http://www.bozok.syo.edu.tr/>).

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study was composed of the students who studied at the BUHS. No method was used for sampling and whole population was accepted as the sample and all of the students who accepted to participate in the study were included in the study.

Data Collection Tools

For data collection; a questionnaire form designed by the researchers after the review of the relevant literature (Tuğrul, 1999; Acar, 2002; Cherniss, 2002; Dökmen, 2004; Kuzu, 2008; Ergin, 2000; Ünsar et al. 2009; Avşar & Kaşıkçı, 2010; Stein & Book, 2003; Smith, 2009) and Emotional Intelligence Evaluation Scale were used.

Questionnaire Form

The form includes 20 questions which included descriptive characteristics, family-related characteristics and such independent variables as reading books on emotional intelligence and taking trainings about emotional intelligence. These characteristics were supposed to be affecting the level of emotional intelligence of the students.

Emotional Intelligence Evaluation Scale (EIES)

EIES was developed by Hall in 1999 in order to measure emotional intelligence and its Turkish

validity and reliability tests were performed by Ergin and Yılmaz (Ergin, 2000) on university students. In this study, Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.83. The scale has five subscales: Emotional Awareness, Managing One's Emotions, Self-Motivation, Empathy and Social Skills. The total score of emotional intelligence is obtained after adding all subscale scores obtained from 30 items (Ünsar et al., 2009).

Scores obtained from EIES and subscales are assessed according to the score-ranges given in Table 1.

Data Collection

The data collection forms were administered at the BUHS, between the 8th of January, 2010 and the 21st of December, 2010. 183 students who participated in the courses and accepted to take part in the study were informed of the purpose of the study and signed forms of consent for the study before the administration of the questionnaire form.

Analysis of the Data

The data obtained from the study were analyzed in computer environment. For the data analysis; descriptive statistics, Shapiro-Wilk Test, Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis Variance Analysis were used.

Ethical Considerations

After official permission to undertake this study was gained from the BUHS, another official permission to undertake pre-administration of the study was obtained from ethics committee at the Medical Faculty of Erciyes University. The students were informed of the purpose of the research before the administration of the form and the scale and their informed consents were signed. Participants were assured of their right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Results

71% of the participant students belonged to ≥ 20 age group and their mean age was 20.66 ± 1.9 years, 67.2% were female students, 96.7% were single. 29.5% were second year students (second class) and 58.5% were born in cities. 42.6% of the students spent their childhood in counties and 82% did not have preschool education. 79.3% of the students regarded their financial status moderate. 65.6% of the students chose the nursing school voluntarily and 69.9% told that

Table 1. Scoring Emotional Intelligence Evaluation Scale (EIES)

Subscales	Low	Normal	High
	(needs substantial development)	(needs some development)	(definitely strong)
Emotional awareness	≤ 25	26 - 30	≥ 31
Managing one's emotions	≤ 26	27 - 31	≥ 32
Self-motivation	≤ 26	27 - 30	≥ 31
Empathy	≤ 25	26 - 30	≥ 31
Social skills	≤ 24	25 - 29	≥ 30
Total score	≤ 129	130 - 154	≥ 155

Table 2. Distribution of Scores of EIES and Subscales

Subscales	Low		Normal		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Emotional awareness	91	49.7	64	34.9	28	15.4	183	100.0
Managing one's emotions	57	31.1	67	36.6	59	32.3	183	100.0
Self-motivation	47	25.6	65	35.5	71	38.9	183	100.0
Empathy	47	25.6	72	39.5	64	34.9	183	100.0
Social skills	55	30.1	68	37.2	60	32.7	183	100.0
Total score	55	30.1	96	52.5	32	17.4	183	100.0

they were pleased to study nursing. A 80.3% of the students had nuclear family type. 81.5% of the students' mothers and 47% of the students' fathers had primary school degree and below.

When emotional intelligence levels of the participant students were investigated, mean total scores of scale were found to be at a normal level (136.9 ± 21.1). Mean scores of Managing One's Emotions (28.4 ± 5.3), Self-Motivation (28.3 ± 5.1), Empathy (28.2 ± 5.0) and Social Skills (26.7 ± 5.0) were at a moderate level whereas mean score of Emotional Awareness (25.3 ± 5.2) was at a low level.

It was found out in Table 2 that no statistically significant difference existed between mean scores in terms of the variables of Sex, Age, Place where childhood was spent and Choice of nursing variables ($p > 0.05$) (Table3).

When mean scores of EIES of the students were analyzed in terms of Class variable; it was noted that mean scores of the scale and mean scores of the subscales of the 4th year students were higher than 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students; yet, this score-difference was statistically significant only in Emotional Awareness ($p < 0.05$) (Table3).

When mean scores of EIES of the students were analyzed in terms of marital status variable; there was statistically significant difference between Social Skills and Marital Status, and mean scores of Social Skills of singles were found to be higher ($p < 0.05$) (Table3).

When mean scores of EIES of the students were analyzed in terms of perceived financial status variable; The mean Self-Motivation score of those who perceived their financial status as low was higher than other groups ($p < 0.05$) (Table3).

When mean scores of EIES of the students were compared in terms of having preschool education variable; a statistically significant difference was observed between Empathy and preschool education variable ($p < 0.05$) (Table3).

When mean scores of EIES of the students were compared in terms of satisfaction with being a nurse; a statistically significant difference was between satisfaction with being a nurse and Self-Motivation ($p < 0.05$) (Table 3).

When mean scores of EIES of the students were compared in terms of family type; mean scores of Social Skills of the group that had nuclear family were higher while mean scores of Emotional Awareness, Managing One's Emotions, Self-

64.5% of the students told that they considered child-raising attitude of their mothers positive whereas 71% of the students considered child-raising attitude of their fathers negative.

Motivation and Empathy of the group that had extended family were higher though no statistically significant difference existed ($p > 0.05$) (Table 4).

There was a statistically significant difference between mean scores of Self-Motivation in point of getting training about emotional intelligence ($p < 0.05$). Mean scores of the group that received training about emotional intelligence were higher than the group that did not receive training about emotional intelligence ($p > 0.05$).

When mean scores of EIES of the students were compared in terms of stress management training; there was statistically significant difference between mean scores of Empathy in terms of participation in stress management training ($p < 0.05$). It was observed that the students who received stress management training had higher mean scores of Empathy.

When mean scores of EIES of the students were evaluated in terms of reading books on emotional intelligence and personal development; a statistically significant difference was detected in the mean scores of Self-Motivation ($p < 0.05$). The mean scores of the group that read books on emotional intelligence were higher (Table 4).

Discussion

In this study which was conducted in order to determine emotional intelligence level of the students, it was found out that the emotional intelligence of 52.2% of the participant students was normal, the emotional intelligence of 30.1% of the students was low and the emotional intelligence of 17.4% of the participant students was high analyzed. When mean total score of EIES was analyzed, mean total score of the scale and mean scores of Managing One's Emotions, Self-Motivation, Empathy, Social Skills were at a normal level whereas mean score of Emotional Awareness was at a low level. The findings of the present study concurred with the findings of the similar studies. The fact that emotional intelligence levels of the nurses were found to be unsatisfactory in the studies (Dökmen, 2004; Kuzu, 2008; Ünsar et al., 2009; Stein & Book, 2008) demonstrated that nursing students were not ready yet in order to adopt professional roles.

Emotional intelligence is a kind of intelligence that can be improved using correct techniques (Stein & Book, 2003). It was noted in the study that the participant students who took emotional intelligence courses and who read books on emotional intelligence and personal development had a better emotional intelligence level. Smith et al. 2009, reported in their study that emotional intelligence occupied a vital place in nursing, increased the quality of student-learning and were effective upon clinical decision-making, critical thinking and employing the knowledge.

The most emphasized factors in terms of emotional intelligence development include mainly sex, age and family environment (Tuğrul, 1999). When mean scores of EIES of the students were analyzed in terms of sex variable, no statistically significant difference existed. Yet, mean scores of Empathy, Social Skill and total mean score of the scale of women were higher while mean scores of Emotional Awareness, Managing One's Emotions and Self-Motivation of men were higher. When the studies on emotional intelligence (Halıçınarlı & Bender, 2010; Ersoy, 2009) are studied, it may be argued that emotional intelligence levels of women have been found to be higher than men even if different scales are used. It may be suggested that fast development of language skills of girls makes them more experienced/successful in explaining their emotions, women can express their emotions more easily thanks to the roles assigned by the society and family members share their emotions with daughters more while men are taught to keep their emotions under control and, therefore, these facts may play a significant role in these results of sex variable (Goleman, 1998; Tuğrul, 1999).

When emotional intelligence of the students was examined in terms of age variable, our study showed no statistically significant difference between mean scores of Emotional Intelligence Evaluation Scale of the groups. However; the group aged ≥ 20 had higher emotional intelligence level. As demonstrated by the results; people can learn to keep their emotions under control, acquire self motivation methods and understand others' emotions better –in brief, they can learn to form an effective communication-with growing age. Some studies emphasized that there was not a significant difference between age and emotional intelligence level (Özdemir & Özdemir, 2007; Öztürk & Deniz, 2008) while many others reported a significant correlation

between age and emotional intelligence level (Güllüce & Işcan, 2010; Gürbüz & Yüksel, 2008) and it may be concluded that emotional intelligence level increases with age.

A statistically significant difference existed between mean scores of Self-Motivation of the groups in terms of perceived financial status. Self-Motivation levels of those who perceived their financial status as low were found to be higher. No statistically significant difference was noted between mean scores of other subscales and mean total score of the scale and the perceived financial status. But, it was seen that mean scores of Managing One's Emotions, Empathy, Social Skills and total mean scores of the scale of the group that perceived financial status as low were the highest one while mean scores of Emotional Awareness of the group that perceived financial status as high were the highest. It may be suggested that high emotional intelligence level of those who perceived financial status as low might have been caused by their different motivational options. It is interesting that different results have been obtained from the studies on the effect of financial status upon emotional intelligence. The study of Yılmaz and Özkan (2011) supported our findings but the study of Yılmaz and Şahin (2004) reported a high level of emotional intelligence among those who perceived their financial status as high. As for the study of Köksal (2003) and Malak (2011), no statistically significant difference was noted between emotional intelligence and perceived socio-economical status. The reason for which different results were obtained from the studies may be explained by the possibility that personal differences may have affected perception of their financial status.

Family circle is a crucial factor in the development of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Sullivan suggested that personality development and childhood experiences emerged -particularly- thanks to mother and child relation (Törüner & Büyükgöneç, 2011). No statistically significant difference was explored between mean scores of EIES and child-raising attitude of the parents. But, mean scores EIES of the group that considered mother child-raising attitude positive were higher than the group that considered mother child-raising attitude negative. In the similar studies (Doğan, 2009; Erdoğan, 2008), it was seen that emotional intelligence

levels of those who considered parents' child-raising attitude positive were higher.

Conclusions

In light of the study results, it is recommended that trainings and studies be conducted in order to improve levels of emotional intelligence of the students.

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Table 3. Distribution Of Descriptive Characteristics Of The Students EIES Mean Scores

Descriptive Characteristics	n	Emotional awareness $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Managing one's emotions $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Self-motivation $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Empathy $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Social skills $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Total score $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)
Sex							
Female	120	25.13±4.9 (25)	28.26±5.4 (30)	28.21±5.0 (29)	28.49±4.7 (29)	26.93±4.9 (28)	136.89±20.3 (141)
Male	63	25.65±5.7 (26) U: 3394.500 p: .379	28.55±5.3 (29) U: 3620.000 p: .835	28.33±5.4 (29) U: 3594.000 p: .775	27.66±5.2 (28.5) U: 3412.000 p: .407	26.10±4.9 (27) U: 3326.500 p: .279	136.86±22.8 (137) U: 3620.500 p: .836
Age							
20 ↓	53	25.35±4.7 (25)	27.98±5.7 (29)	27.79±4.9 (29)	27.79±4.6 (29)	26.77±4.8 (28)	135.64±20.1 (137)
20 and ↑	130	25.27±5.4 (26) U: 3358.000 p: .789	28.51±5.2 (29.5) U: 3303.500 p: .663	28.47 ±5.2 (29) U: 3074.000 p: .252	28.40±5.1 (29) U: 3099.500 p: .287	26.61±5.1 (27) U: 3429.000 p: .961	137.39±21.5 (141) U: 3189.500 p: .432
Class							
1. Class	50	26.14±4.9 (26)	28.24±6.0 (30)	28.28±5.0 (29)	27.96±4.4 (29)	26.76±4.5 (27)	137.80±19.9(139)
2. Class	54	25.09±4.4 (25)	28.28±3.9 (29)	27.66±4.5 (28)	28.05±4.9 (28)	26.37±4.9 (27)	135.33±17.5(136)
3. Class	44	23.29±6.2 (24)	27.25±6.5 (29)	27.56±6.8 (30)	27.84±6.1 (29)	26.00±5.6 (27)	132.20±27.9(138)
4. Class	35	26.94±4.6 (28) Kw: 8.771 p: .032	30.05±4.2 (31) Kw: 4.673 p: .197	29.97±2.8 (20) Kw: 4.429 p: .219	29.34±3.8 (29) Kw: 1.651 p: .648	27.80±4.6 (28) Kw: 1.933 p: .586	143.85±16.2(144) Kw: 4.839 p: .184
Marital Status							
Married	6	23.83±2.3 (24)	27.50±4.8 (27)	27.33±4.1(28)	25.50±5.1 (26)	22.16±3.9 (20.5)	126.33±11.5 (128)
Single	177	25.35±5.2 (26) U: 395.000 p: .285	28.38±5.4 (30) U: 428.000 p: .418	28.28±5.2 (29) U: 420.500 p: .385	28.31±4.9 (29) U: 339.500 p: .132	26.81±4.9 (27) U: 235.500 p: .020	137.24±21.3 (141) U: 299.000 p: .069
Occurrences of childhood Settlement							
Village	34	25.41±5.4 (27)	27.44±6.0 (28)	28.97±5.2 (30)	27.61±7.6 (29)	25.58±5.2 (27)	135.11±24.0(142.5)
county	78	26.08±5.0 (26)	28.62±5.2 (30)	27.96±5.2 (29)	28.37±4.8 (29)	26.80±4.9 (27)	137.76±21.1(139.5)
City	71	24.38±5.2 (25) Kw: 4.308 p: .116	28.50±5.2 (29) Kw: .833 p: .659	28.22±5.0 (29) Kw: 1.768 p: .413	28.35±4.7 (29) Kw: .098 p: .952	27.01±4.8 (28) Kw: 1.871 p: .392	136.76±19.9 (140) Kw: .105 p: .949

Table 3. Distribution Of Descriptive Characteristics Of The Students EIES Mean Scores (Continued)

Descriptive Characteristics	n	Emotional awareness $\bar{X} \pm SS$ (Median)	Managing one's emotions $\bar{X} \pm SS$ (Median)	Self-motivation $\bar{X} \pm SS$ (Median)	Empathy $\bar{X} \pm SS$ (Median)	Social skills $\bar{X} \pm SS$ (Median)	Total score $\bar{X} \pm SS$ (Median)
economic status							
Low	22	25.54±5.8 (26)	28.81±5.0 (29)	30.77±2.8 (31)	29.45±3.8 (29)	28.00±4.5 (28)	142.77±16.3 (145)
Medium	144	25.03±5.0 (25)	28.29±5.2 (29)	27.80±5.2 (29)	28.02±4.8 (29)	26.58±4.9 (27)	135.84±20.5(138.5)
Well	17	27.23±6.0 (29)	28.29±6.7 (31)	28.76±5.7 (30)	28.29±6.6 (31)	25.58±5.8 (28)	138,11±30.3(141)
		Kw: 4.290 p: .117	Kw: .246 p: .884	Kw: 7.683 p: .021	Kw: 1.254 p: .534	Kw: 2.450 p: .294	Kw: 2.878 p: .237
Pre-school Education							
Get training	33	26.36±4.6 (26)	28.97±4.1 (30)	28.84±3.6 (29)	29.90±3.7 (30)	27.51±4.1 (28)	142.27±16.3 (142)
Don't get training	150	25.06±5.3 (25.5)	28.22±5.6 (29)	28.12±5.4 (29)	27.85±5.1 (29)	26.47±5.1 (27)	135.70±21.9(139.5)
		U: 2210,500 p: .336	U: 2402,500 p: .792	U: 2474,500 p: .999	U: 1911,000 p: .040	U: 2228,500 p: .370	U: 2133,000 p: .214
Nursing Prefer Status							
Who want	120	25.45±5.2 (26)	28.20±5.1 (29)	28.07±4.9 (29)	27.94±4.8 (27)	26.30±4.9 (27)	135.86±20,2 (138)
Who Don't Want	63	25.00±5.3 (25)	28.67±5.8 (30)	28.60±5,5 (30)	28.76±5.1 (28)	27.35±4.9 (28)	138.84±22.7 (142)
		U: 3597.000 p: .590	U: 3448.500 p: .329	U: 3347.500 p: .202	U: 3351.500 p: .207	U: 3311.000 p: .167	U: 3358.000 p: .215
Status Of Being Happy To Be A Nurse							
Who are pleased	17	23.82±5.2 (24)	25.70±5.9 (29)	26.41±5.8 (28)	26.82±5.3 (27)	27.00±4.3 (27)	129.70±21.3 (129)
Who are not pleased	128	25.36±5.3 (26)	28.58±5.1 (29)	27.91±5.1 (29)	28.41±4.9 (29)	26.54±5.1 (27)	136.86±21.8 (141)
Who are very pleased	38	25.76±5.0 (26)	28.81±5.7 (31)	30.21±4.5 (30)	28.21±4.6 (29)	26.92±4.5 (28)	140.16±18.0 (142.5)
		KW: 1.910 p: .385	KW: 4.907 p: .086	KW: 9.834 p: .022	KW: 1.621 p: .445	KW: .272 p: .873	KW: 3.704 p: .157

Table 4. Distribution of Descriptive Characteristics of The Students' Parents EIES Mean Scores (N:183)

Characteristics	n	Emotional awareness $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Managing one's emotions $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Self-motivation $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Empathy $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Social skills $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)	Total score $\bar{X}\pm SS$ (Median)
Family Type							
Core family	147	25.10±5.0 (25)	28.21±5.5 (29)	28.14±5.1 (29)	28.21±5.6 (29)	26.68±4.8 (27)	136.25±21.5 (138)
Large Family	36	26.11±5.8 (27)	28.94±4.3 (30)	28.69±5.1 (30)	28.25±4.4 (29)	26.58±5.2 (28)	139.44±19.7 (141)
		U: 2207.000 p: .122	U: 2500.500 p: .609	U: 2434.500 p: .456	U: 2576.500 p: .807	U: 2641.000 p: .986	U: 2435.000 p: .459
Mother's Parenting Attitudes							
Positive	118	25.37±5.2 (26)	28.66±5.3 (30)	28.44±5.2 (29)	28.46±5.0 (29)	26.70±5.3 (28)	137.55±22.0 (142)
Negative	65	25.16±5.3 (25)	27.81±5.4 (28)	27.90±5.0 (29)	27.78±4.8 (28)	26.58±4.2 (27)	135.66±19.5 (137)
		U: 3653.500 p: .596	U: 5532.000 p: .190	U: 3489.000 p: .311	U: 3468.500 p: .284	U: 3654.000 p: .597	U: 3457.000 p: .270
Father's Parenting Attitudes							
Positive	53	25.73±5.1 (26)	28.13±5.1(30)	27.84±5.3 (29)	28.32±4.8 (29)	26.13±5.0 (27)	136.05±23.7 (142)
Negative	130	25.12±5.2 (25)	28.45±5.3 (29)	28.41±5.1 (29)	28.18±5.0 (29)	26.87±4.9 (27)	137.22±20.6(138)
		U: 3158.000 p: .376	U: 3358.500 p: .790	U: 3247.500 p: .542	U: 3373.000 p: .824	U: 3189.500 p: .431	U: 3327.000 p: .717