RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY AMONG NURSING STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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Abstract

Background: Nursing students require emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy (SE) to effectively manage patient care, communication, and professional growth. This study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among nursing students. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional survey was carried out utilizing standardized instruments, namely the Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale and the General Self-Efficacy Scale. A sample of nursing students from a university was recruited for the study, using a convenience sampling method. Participant emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy in nursing students. **Results:** The majority of nursing students demonstrated a significant level of emotional intelligence (69.46%) and self-efficacy (57.94%). There was a notable correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. The strongest correlation was found between managing one's own emotions and self-efficacy ($r = .604^{**}$), while the weakest correlation was observed between managing one's own emotions and perception of emotion ($r = .545^{**}$). **Conclusion:** Nursing students must possess emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. This requirement has significant implications for education and training programs. Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy aid nursing students in effectively managing the intricate emotional and professional requirements of their profession, thereby enhancing patient care and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Self-Efficacy, Nurses, Students, Professional Development, Emotional Regulation.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing students need EI and SE to handle the many challenges of clinical practice and patient care. Understanding the prevalence and interaction of these constructs in nursing students is crucial for improving educational interventions and nurse preparation. [1] Meyer and Maludy introduced emotional intelligence in the early 1990s. [2] This includes cognitive and emotional skills ([3]). Emotion self-assessment, self-expression assessment, identifying others' emotions for emotional self-regulation, and using emotion to perform are the four components of this cognitive structure. A study found that emotional intelligence predicted academic achievement twice as well as cognitive intelligence [5]. Another study found no correlation between EI and academic performance. Future research should define EI's role in admissions [6]. Nursing practice relies heavily on emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and express emotions [7]. Nurses with higher emotional intelligence can better manage stress, communicate with patients and colleagues, and handle complex interpersonal dynamics in healthcare [8]. Studies show that emotional intelligence improves nursing job satisfaction, patient satisfaction, and care quality [9]. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as the belief that one can achieve specific goals or tasks. It is also important for nursing performance and career success [10]. Self-efficacy helps nursing students overcome obstacles, solve problems proactively, and

stay focused on their careers. Self-efficacy beliefs in nursing students predict clinical competence, academic performance, and nursing retention [11]. Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are crucial factors in determining academic success or failure [12]. Low self-efficacy also causes stress management failure and ineffective anxiety and stress [13]. Research shows [14] People who doubt their abilities are disappointed in risky situations and less likely to succeed [15].

NEED OF THE STUDY

High-quality nursing patient care requires emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy for communication, empathy, and relationship-building. (1) Nursing students face high stress and emotional challenges during their education and clinical practice. High emotional intelligence helps students recognize and manage stress, improving resilience and well-being [2]. Self-efficacy beliefs also affect students' perceptions of their ability to handle academic and clinical demands, reducing stress and improving resilience [3]. Nurses with higher emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are more resilient to workplace stressors, reducing burnout and turnover intentions and promoting workforce stability [4]. Understanding the relationship between EI and nursing student self-efficacy can help develop targeted educational interventions and curriculum improvements. Identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in these domains allows educators to design interventions to improve emotional intelligence and self-efficacy skills throughout nursing education programs, preparing students for successful and fulfilling careers. This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in nursing students, contributing to the literature on nursing education, professional development, and patient care outcomes [5].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Aim: To establish the correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in nursing students. The study utilized a quantitative approach, specifically employing a cross-sectional survey methodology, to examine and establish the correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy (SE) among nursing students enrolled in the undergraduate Nursing program at the RAK Medical and Health Sciences University Ras Al Khaimah U.A.E during the academic year 2021-22. **Population:** The target population, which was also accessible, consisted of 250 individuals. The necessary sample size was determined to be 192, based on a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error[16]. The study utilized a convenience sampling method. A total of 214 students took part in the study after giving informed consent. The study did not have any explicit exclusion criteria.

Data Collection Instruments:

1) **Emotional Intelligence Scale:** Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale, which is based on Salovey and Mayer's (1990)[17] original model of emotional intelligence was used in the present study. It is a five-point self-reported scale that contains 33 items. Reverse scoring was done for items No. 5,28 and 33. The total score ranges between 33 – 165. In the present study score between 33-77 were considered as low, 78 -121 as moderate, and ≥ 122 as high. This tool is a standardized tool used by many researchers[18]. The reliability coefficient of the tool in the present study was α = .87.

2) **General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES):** The GSES is a widely used measure of self-efficacy beliefs, assessing individuals' perceived confidence in their ability to cope with challenging situations and achieve desired outcomes (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)[19]. The scale comprises 10 items rated on a four-point Likert-type response format. Internal consistency for the tool was .76. Score between 10 -20 was considered as low, 21- 30 moderate, and 31-40 as high.

3) **Data Collection Procedure:**

   1. Permission was obtained from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (RAKMHSU -REC-094-2021/22-F-N) to conduct the study.
   2. Participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose and procedures of the study.
   3. Data were collected using face to face surveys administered during designated class times assigned by class coordinators
   4. Participants completed the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EI) and General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) independently and anonymously.
   5. The completed surveys were collected, confidentiality and data security were maintained.

Data Analysis:

1) Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the participants and summarize their scores on the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EI) and General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES).

2) A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to investigate the correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy (SE) in nursing students.

3) A p-value of less than .05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Ethical Considerations: This study followed ethical protocols for conducting research with human participants, which included obtaining informed consent, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity, and obtaining approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

RESULTS

Section I: Data related to the demographic distribution

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic variables (N=214)

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1) Age: Years		
a) 18-22 Yrs.	157	73.36
b) 23 – 27 Yrs.	49	22.90
c) ≥ 28 Yrs.	8	3.74
2) Gender:		
a) Male	37	17.29
b) Female	177	82.71
3) BSN Year		
a) I Year	62	28.97
b) II Year	56	26.17
c) III Year	56	26.17
d) IV Year	40	18.69

As per the data presented in Table 1 majority of the participants were female (82.71%) and between 18-22 years of age.

Section II: Data related the level of Emotional Intelligence and self efficacy among Nursing Student
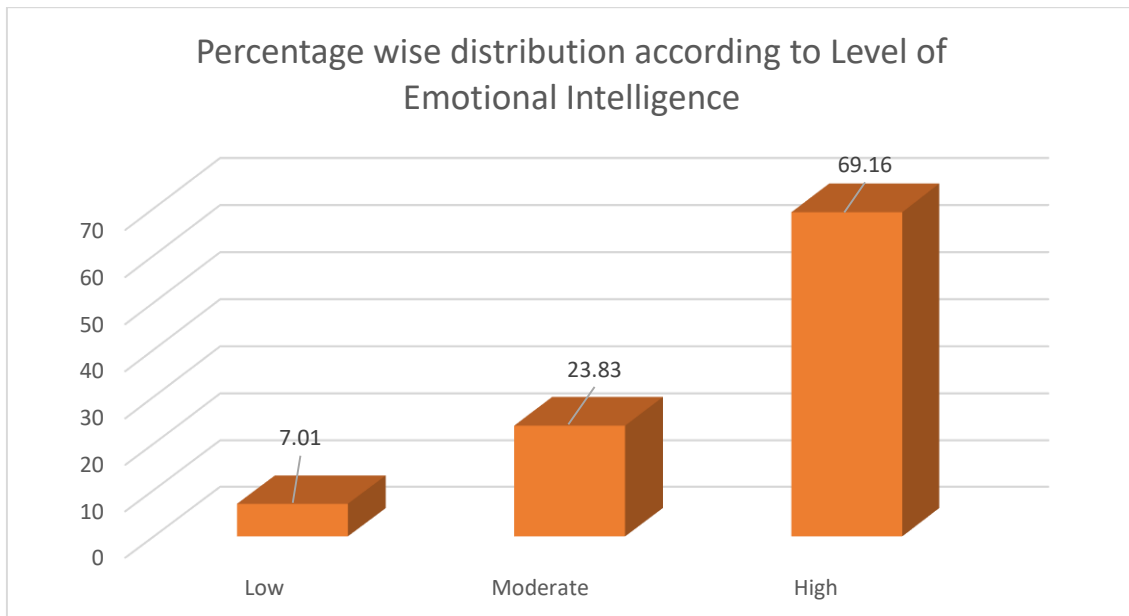

Figure 1: Percentage-wise distribution according to Level of Emotional Intelligence

Figure 1 illustrates the extent of Emotional Intelligence among the Nursing students. The data indicates that 69.46% of students possess a high level of Emotional Intelligence, while 23.85% exhibit a moderate level and 7.01% demonstrate a poor level of Emotional Intelligence.
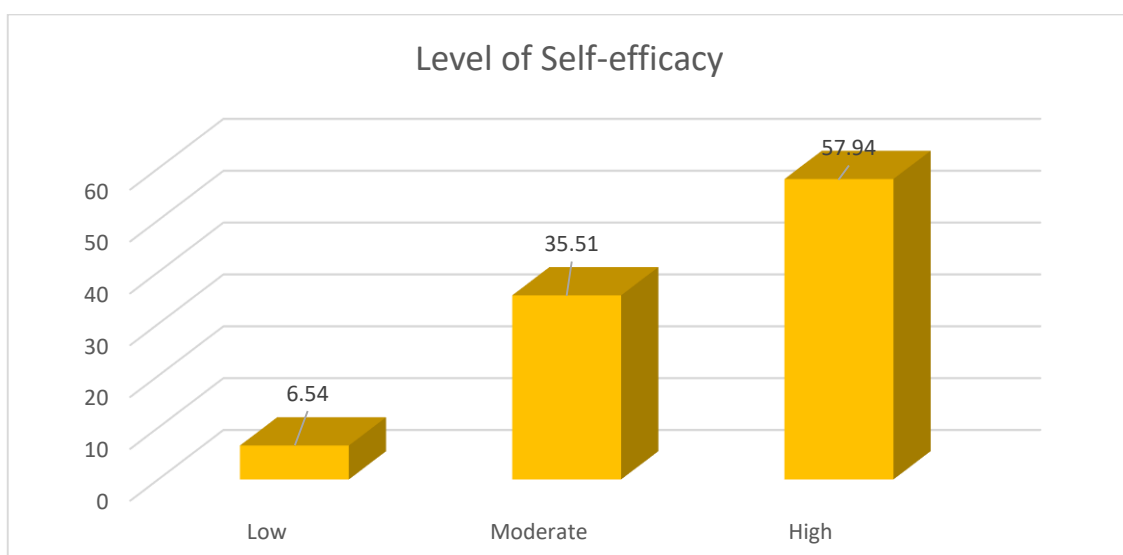

Figure 2: Percentage-wise distribution according to Level of Self-efficacy

Figure 2 illustrates the degree of self-efficacy among nursing students. The data indicates that 57.94% of students possess a high level of self-efficacy, while 35.51% exhibit a moderate level, and 6.54% demonstrate a low level of self-efficacy.

Section III: Correlation between Emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy (SE) among nursing students

Table 2: Correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among nursing students (N=214)

Variable	Mean	SD	r value	p value	Remark
Emotional Intelligence	126.36	24.84	.635**	<.0001	S
Self-Efficacy	31.21	6.51			

Table 2 shows that the average score for Emotional Intelligence (EI) among nursing students was 126.36, with a standard deviation (SD) of 24.84. These findings indicate that, on average, the nursing students in the sample demonstrated a moderate degree of emotional intelligence. The average score for SE among nursing students was 31.21, with a standard deviation (SD) of 6.51. On average, the nursing students in the sample reported moderate to high levels of self-efficacy. The correlation coefficient (r-value) of 0.635 indicates a robust positive association between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among nursing students. As emotional intelligence rises, self-efficacy also tends to rise, and vice versa. The p-value of <.0001 indicates that the correlation between EI (Emotional Intelligence) and SE (Self-Efficacy) is statistically significant.

Table 3: Correlation between domains of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and self - efficacy (S.E) among Nursing students. (N=214)

	Mean	SD	r value
Emotional Intelligence	126.36	24.84	.635**
Self-Efficacy	31.21	6.51	
Perception of emotion	37.45	6.638	.545**
Managing own emotions	35.53	7.517	.604**
Managing others Emotions	31.01	6.615	.549**
Utilization of emotions	23.38	5.223	.565**

 **.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows a notable correlation between all domains of Emotional Intelligence and self-efficacy. The correlation coefficient of .604** (p<.01) indicates a strong positive relationship between the ability to manage one's own emotions and self-efficacy. Conversely, there is a weak correlation between the perception of emotions and self-efficacy.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present investigation indicated that a majority of the subjects were of the female gender and belonged to the age bracket of 18-22 years. A significant proportion of the study participants demonstrated a high level of emotional intelligence (69.46%) and self-efficacy (57.64%). These findings suggest that the majority of nursing students possess robust abilities in identifying, comprehending, and managing emotions, which are essential for effective interpersonal interactions and clinical practice. Furthermore, it suggests that a significant proportion of nursing students hold strong beliefs about their ability to perform nursing tasks and effectively overcome professional challenges. However, only 7.01% of nursing students showed a deficient level of emotional intelligence, while 6.54% demonstrated low self-efficacy, which requires the educators' attention. The key discovery of this study is the correlation between two variables, namely emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. The results were determined to be highly statistically significant, with a correlation coefficient of r

= .635** and a p-value of less than .0001. It suggests that as the level of emotional intelligence rose, self-efficacy also concurrently increased among nursing student. The reason for this could be that individuals with a high level of emotional intelligence possess superior skills in comprehending and controlling their emotions. Consequently, this enhances their confidence in their capacity to accomplish various tasks and overcome challenges. Furthermore, emotional intelligence has a direct impact on self-efficacy and also has an indirect influence on it through coping styles, resulting in more favorable psychological and behavioral results. Thus, cultivating emotional intelligence in individuals can enhance the cultivation of a robust sense of self-efficacy, empowering them to effectively navigate diverse situations with assurance and adaptability[20,21].

The current study found a strong correlation between all aspects of emotional intelligence, including the ability to perceive emotions, regulate one's own emotions, manage others' emotions, effectively use emotions and self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by numerous researchers [22,23]. All components of emotional intelligence play a pivotal role in shaping self-efficacy levels, which in turn has demonstrated its influence on academic performance, job performance, and personal growth. Research has also shown that people with higher emotional intelligence skills tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-confidence, resulting in better results in different areas. Therefore, comprehending the level of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy can play a crucial role in enhancing the achievement and overall welfare of nursing students, in both academic and professional environments[24,25]. Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are interconnected concepts that have a significant influence on different aspects of individual's lives. Studies conducted in various disciplines, including education and psychology, have consistently demonstrated a strong and meaningful correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy[23,26]. Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are vital factors in the academic and professional growth of nursing students. Studies demonstrate a robust correlation between emotional intelligence and self-esteem in nursing students, which is vital for their professional growth[27].

In addition, the study conducted by[28] emphasizes the inverse correlation between self-efficacy and emotional intelligence with academic stress among undergraduate nursing students. This study, which included a sample of 197 nursing students, employed the Perception of Academic Stress scale in addition to instruments for assessing self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. The findings demonstrated a significant and robust relationship between self-efficacy ($p < 0.001$; b = -0.385; $R2 = 0.883$) and emotional intelligence ($p < 0.001$; b = -0.862; $R2 = 0.893$) with academic stress. Both factors exhibited a combined negative association with academic stress ($p < 0.001$; $R2 = 0.899$). These findings emphasize the significance of improving self-efficacy and emotional intelligence to reduce academic stress levels among undergraduate nursing students, which could potentially enhance their overall academic performance and well-being. De Luna's study highlights the importance of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy when nursing students are transitioning to blended learning. The research highlights the strong correlation between emotional intelligence and resilience, as well as between self-efficacy and resilience. This emphasizes the importance of these factors in enhancing students' capacity to adjust and flourish when confronted with unforeseen challenges during the pandemic and educational changes. The study reveals that individuals with elevated levels of

emotional intelligence and self-efficacy exhibit a significant positive association between the two traits. Consequently, these individuals demonstrate enhanced academic performance, decreased stress levels, and improved ability to adapt to novel learning approaches[29]. The present study's findings indicate that all domains were significantly correlated with self-efficacy. However, managing one's own emotions had the highest correlation (0.604**), while perception of emotions had the lowest correlation (0.545**) with self-efficacy. Sun & Lyu, 2022 found similar results, indicating that college students who assess their self-efficacy based on their emotional state and possess emotional regulation skills are more likely to have favorable psychological and behavioral outcomes. Consequently, individuals are more inclined to attain greater self-efficacy in endeavors such as academic courses, professional internships, and employment-related engagements[30]. In this study, nursing students' perception of emotions correlated significantly with their self-efficacy. This relationship has been shown to have a crucial impact on academic performance. Studies have demonstrated that there is a negative relationship between emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and academic procrastination. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy are more likely to have lower rates of academic procrastination[21].

The current study also found a strong correlation between the ability to manage one's own emotions and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is significantly influenced by it in different professions and situations. Research conducted in India in 2023[31] and among college students in China[32] consistently shows that there is a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. More specifically, certain aspects of emotional intelligence, such as emotional regulation, understanding emotions, and intrapersonal emotional competencies, are strong predictors of and contribute to higher levels of self-efficacy. These findings emphasize the significance of cultivating emotional intelligence abilities to enhance self-efficacy, resulting in improved performance and outcomes in diverse professional and educational environments. The relationship between the utilization of emotions and self-efficacy among nursing students is a significant area of study. Significant relationship between these two variables observed in the present study. It will help the nursing students to adapt to challenging clinical environments, enhancing decision-making, and coping with difficulties effectively[33]. Additionally, research has shown its usefulness in enhancing academic performance, critical thinking, and quality of care in the nursing profession[34]. The correlation between the perception of emotions and self-efficacy among nursing students is crucial for comprehending their levels of academic stress and performance. Research has demonstrated a notable association between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, suggesting that higher levels of emotional intelligence can result in enhanced self-efficacy[28] Moreover, the correlation between emotional intelligence and self-confidence in nursing students highlights the influence of emotional intelligence on self-assurance and possibly on levels of self-efficacy as well[35]. It is also observed that nursing students who have difficulty in regulating their own emotions may perceive higher levels of stress, which could result in psychopathological perceptions of their training environment.[36]

Implications

The relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among nursing students has significant implications for their academic performance and overall well-being. Studies have shown a clear link between emotional intelligence and self-

efficacy in nursing students, indicating that higher levels of emotional intelligence can lead to increased self-confidence and a stronger belief in one's abilities. Moreover, the introduction of training programs aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and self-efficacy can result in a more advantageous learning environment, improve teaching techniques, and ultimately enhance students' academic achievement. Furthermore, the capacity to acquire knowledge autonomously has been acknowledged as a determinant that impacts the correlation between emotional intelligence, optimism, and academic resilience in nursing students. This underscores the importance of developing these skills to successfully navigate the evolving realm of nursing education.

Limitations: The study was restricted to undergraduate nursing students from a specific university in UA.E., therefore the findings cannot be extrapolated to a broader population.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings have demonstrated a robust correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in nursing students. Individuals with elevated levels of emotional intelligence (EI) typically demonstrate increased self-efficacy. This suggests that the capacity to identify, comprehend, and regulate emotions effectively boosts confidence in one's competence to carry out nursing duties and address clinical obstacles. The strong correlation between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among nursing students has important implications for their academic achievement and overall well-being. Research has indicated that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy tend to experience less stress in their academic pursuits, exhibit greater self-assurance, and demonstrate an increased ability to bounce back from academic challenges. The significance of fostering emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in nursing education is highlighted by this relationship. This is crucial to establish a supportive learning environment, improve students' stress management skills, and equip them for the challenges posed by the changing educational landscape, particularly in the context of online learning and the influence of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Enhancing these skills can result in improved academic achievements, heightened flexibility, and enhanced overall welfare among nursing students.

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