

Emotional Intelligence among the Nursing Students of Selected Nursing Educational Institutes in Sri Lanka

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Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and effectively manage one's own emotions as well as those of others. For nurses, Emotional intelligence is essential in integrating emotional insights to enhance critical thinking and foster personal development. This study aimed to investigate the emotional intelligence levels of nursing students across selected educational institutes in Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross-sectional design was used, with EI measured using a validated self-administered Genos EI scale, comprising seven categories. The study compared EI levels of undergraduate nursing students at the University of Peradeniya (UoP) and Diploma nursing students at the Nursing Training School (NTS), Anuradhapura. Chi-square tests, independent sample t-tests, and Spearman correlation analyses were employed to examine associations, group differences, and relationships among variables, respectively. Ethical approval was granted by the Ethical Review Committee of the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya (AHS/ERC/2022/022). The study involved 424 participants, selected via stratified random sampling: 140 undergraduates from UoP and 284 diploma students from NTS. Self-reports showed high EI levels for both groups, 67.1% of undergraduates and 57.7% of diploma students. However, significant differences in total EI scores were found ($t = 2.33$, $p = 0.02$), with undergraduates scoring higher (mean = 101.13) than diploma students (mean = 97.95). An association between the academic group and EI levels was noted ($p = 0.015$). Both groups also displayed increased EI from 1st-year to final-year students (UoP $p = 0.011$; NTS $p = 0.004$). Additionally, a weak positive correlation between EI and students' z-scores was observed ($p = 0.006$, $r = +0.14$). The results demonstrate that emotional intelligence levels vary significantly between undergraduate and diploma nursing students, with undergraduates displaying higher EI. EI increases with academic progression in both groups. Finally, while there is a connection between EI and academic performance, the relationship is modest, indicating that emotional intelligence is one of many factors contributing to academic outcomes. Therefore, integrating emotional intelligence trainings into nursing education is vital.

Keywords: *emotional intelligence, nursing students, Sri Lanka*