EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND STUDENT SUCCESS IN PRELICENSURE NURSING PROGRAMS

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Purpose: With the shortage of registered nurses and continued growth of healthcare professions, the study of student admission practices and success of students within nursing programs is of growing importance. Emotional intelligence (EI) is gaining attention, as it has been correlated with overall success in a variety of fields, including nursing. EI is the ability to understand emotions in oneself and the ability to manage behavior and relationships. It takes into account self-awareness and regulation, social ability, empathy, and motivation. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between EI and success in pre-licensure nursing programs as measured by self-reported grade point average (GPA).

Methods: The 20 participants in the study were students either enrolled in the traditional bachelor's of science nursing (BSN) program or the second degree prelicensure nursing program at The University of Texas at Austin. Participants were recruited during select traditional BSN and second degree courses and through fliers posted around the School of Nursing.

A study packet which included a cover page, instructions, consent form, and form to collect self-reported UT GPA was given to participants. The study used the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) instrument, a 141 item tool, to assess a standardized EI score. MSCEIT was administered on the computers at the School of Nursing’s Learning Center, and the test was open for 8 weeks for the participants to complete on their own time. MSCEIT also collects demographic information such as age, gender, and race before the test begins.

Findings: The MSCEIT has a standardized scoring system, with mean= 100, standard deviation= 15. No significant relationship was found between EI and GPA (r= -0.06, p= 0.82). In addition, no difference was found between the emotional intelligence scores of the students obtaining their first baccalaureate degree and the emotional intelligence scores of the post-baccalaureate students using an independent t-test (t= -0.92, p= 0.38).

Conclusions: The study confirmed MSCEIT’s ease of use and interpretation for investigators. The preliminary, pilot nature of this study and the resultant small sample size may have contributed to the lack of statistically significant results. We did find that while the testing company allot 30-45 minutes for the test, it took the participants approximately 25.05 minutes on average to complete the test. The lack of significance may also be an indication that students who were already in the pre-licensure nursing program at the university are a homogeneous sample who already have relatively high grade point averages. Reduced variability may reduce the correlations. This indicates a continuing need for future research.

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