

Unveiling the heart of nursing: the transformative impact of emotional intelligence on patient-centred care

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Abstract

The five-component model developed by Daniel Goleman serves as the primary description of emotional intelligence (EI). EI plays a significant role in the nursing profession by assisting students in acquiring traits including motivation, self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and interpersonal competence. Consequently, nurses equipped with heightened EI contribute to treatment that is both compassionate and highly collaborative. Positive impacts of EI on stress management, collaboration, and the promotion of personal and professional development have been linked to higher levels of job satisfaction. It also has a significant role in uniting healthcare workers from various backgrounds, which promotes improved communication and, eventually, improves patient care. Associations between increased levels of nurses' EI and improved interpersonal relationships, professional success, and a harmonious work-life balance emphasise the multifaceted advantages of EI in the nursing profession. Additionally, EI has a crucial role in influencing patient-nurse interactions, communication, trust, patient satisfaction, and overall outcomes. The integration of EI training into nursing education is essential, with a specific emphasis on the development of skills related to the identification, comprehension, and regulation of emotions. Continuing education and mentoring initiatives have the potential to further augment the EI of nurses. Improving healthcare outcomes and services requires an understanding of the importance of combining nursing practice and education.

Key words: emotional intelligence, nursing, patient-centred care

Introduction

Success has long been defined in terms of intelligence, which is often assessed via tests like the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). But this research explores the crucial role that EI plays in determining overall success and growth, acknowledging the limitations of relying solely on IQ. EI is recognized as a useful and often transforming element in the field of nursing, where complex human relationships and patient-centred care are crucial.(1)

Understanding EI

EI refers to the ability to comprehend and regulate emotions to efficiently cope with emotional situations.(2) EI consists of five attributes namely Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Empathy and Social skills.(3) Self-awareness is the tendency to recognize one's own emotions, attitudes, and behaviours in response to certain situations(4) and self-regulation is the ability to manage and govern one's thoughts, emotions, and actions in ways that

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are acceptable for reaching a desired outcome. Better self-regulation helps to maintain awareness about well-being, connection to others and self-efficacy.(5) Motivation, defined as the energising of behaviour in pursuit of a goal, is a fundamental element of our interaction with the world and with each other.(6) Empathy is a complex psychological-influencing social interaction; it plays a role in the understanding of others' feelings, suffering, and behaviour with a significant link to compassion. It is a motivated phenomenon that allows people to connect emotionally, mainly by sharing experiences and feelings.(7) Social skills are simply the abilities necessary to get along with others to create and maintain relationships.(8)

Currently, EI is widely utilised in academic institutions due to its unique ability to shape the personality and the professionalism of the individuals facilitating exemplary performance. It is believed to have been given tremendous success in shaping individuals to be iconic in their contribution to the field of their specialisation. EI is also well recognized as very influential in improving the standards of nursing education by comprehensively developing the skills and the performance of the nursing students like academic success, empathy, quality patient care, mindfulness, self-realisation, mutual trust and understanding, teamwork, leadership skills and job satisfaction.(1)

Theoretical Framework

The use of theoretical models, like Daniel Goleman's, is crucial to understanding EI in the nursing setting which categorises EI into motivation, self-regulation, self-awareness, empathy, and social skills.(9) This model gives a useful structure for learning about and improving EI in nursing. In nursing, Self-awareness helps nurses identify their sentiments and prejudices and manage their emotions to give better care(10) and self-regulation is essential in high-stress conditions as it enables nurses to maintain their composure and calmness in the face of challenging circumstances.(11) Nurses who possess high levels of motivation are more persuaded to employ additional effort to safeguard the overall welfare of their patients.(12) The capacity for empathy enables nurses to establish a profound emotional connection with their patients, hence augmenting the provision of patient-centric care(13), and the acquisition of social skills holds significant importance within the nursing profession, particularly in relation to fostering effective teamwork and collaboration, as

well as facilitating effective communication with patients.(14)

The Significance of EI in Nursing

Nurses must be able to manage challenging and delicate circumstances in the healthcare profession, which frequently requires them to cope with intense emotions. Nurses are supposed to deliver care that is both effective and compassionate.(15) Moreover, EI holds multifaceted significance in nursing, impacting both interpersonal interactions and broader healthcare contexts.

As a key stress management tool

In their daily lives, nurses are frequently exposed to a wide range of stressful scenarios and conditions. These stressors include frequent exposure to life-threatening situations, the emotional burden placed on patients and their families, insufficient staffing levels, excessive workloads, personal conflicts, the challenges of shift work, a lack of adequate mental support, interactions with physicians that may lead to confrontation, and ambiguity about the extent to which their authority reaches. EI helps regulate stress, making it simpler for nurses to deal with the emotional toll that their career has on them, and helps them maintain their well-being.(16) Nurses with high EI can work peacefully with their thoughts and feelings since they can manage themselves appropriately in any stressful situations thus enhancing their resilience.(17)

Teamwork and collaboration

Collaboration and teamwork are essential in healthcare settings to provide patients with thorough and efficient care. Since nursing is a highly collaborative profession it greatly depends on healthcare practitioners' ability to function as a solid team. EI is crucial in promoting effective cooperation and interprofessional communication and consequently improving patient outcomes.(18) Healthcare professionals from a variety of disciplines (i.e. nurses, physicians, therapists, social workers, etc.) collaborate to give patients comprehensive treatment through interdisciplinary cooperation. These many skill sets and personalities are held together cohesively by EI.(19) Disparities in viewpoints, priorities, and communication styles, however, can give rise to disputes within healthcare

teams. The ability to resolve disagreements in a way that best serves the patient's interests is something that EI gives nurses.(20) To ensure patient safety and continuity of care, effective communication is essential throughout shift changes and patient handoffs. High EI nurses are exceptional in this vital area of nursing.

Personal and professional growth

EI starts with self-awareness, which is the ability to contemplate and unbiasedly evaluate one's own emotions, reactions, and behaviours. Nurses may be better equipped to understand their emotional environments by looking at their stresses, biases, and emotional reactions. As an illustration, consider a nurse who skilfully uses self-regulation strategies to keep herself cool and collected under pressure. Both the patient's opinion of the care they receive, and the nurse's wellbeing are enhanced by this attribute. Since they are self-aware, they can pinpoint areas where their EI needs to be strengthened.(21) Nurses who develop high EI also experience improvements in their relationships. A nurse may communicate with a worried patient and understand their concerns and fears by demonstrating appropriate empathy. Patients are more satisfied and follow the treatment plan when they have an empathic relationship with the nurse. Emotional regulation, empathy, and effective communication are the key foundations of healthy relationships with friends, family, and other loved ones. People's overall emotional well-being and contentment are supported by strong interpersonal bonds.(22)

Emotionally intelligent nurses are typically unique in their field. These nurses are highly valued assets in healthcare organisations because of their capacity to interact with patients, work together with colleagues, and handle stressful situations. A research conducted on nurses employed in Jordanian government hospitals found that those with higher EI had better interpersonal relationships. These collaborations were also associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, retention, patient care quality, efficiency, and productivity.(23) Hence EI can lead to career advancement opportunities(24), such as leadership roles, specialised positions, or teaching and mentoring roles. EI development is an ongoing process. Just as healthcare is an ever-evolving field, so is EI. Nurses committed to EI growth often seek out additional training, workshops, and resources to expand their EI toolkit. They may also become advocates for the development of EI in their workplace, sharing their knowledge and experiences

with colleagues and encouraging a culture of EI within their organisation. High EI can also help nurses achieve a healthier work-life balance(24) and by understanding their own emotional needs and limitations, they are more likely to set boundaries and prioritise self-care. This balance is essential for nurses to maintain their well-being while providing consistent, high-quality patient care.

Job satisfaction

The degree of job satisfaction plays a crucial role in enhancing work performance and fostering career goals. This factor has significant importance for both the workers themselves and their employers. This phenomenon results in reduced employee turnover rates, enhanced workforce efficiency, and elevated levels of patient contentment. Nursing and hospital management should prioritise strategies aimed at enhancing work happiness since this has the potential to positively impact performance and hence elevate the quality of patient care. Based on extant scholarly research, a strong positive association has been consistently observed between work satisfaction and commitment, as well as enhanced job performance.(25)

EI and patient care

Patient-nurse interaction

The relationship that nurses have with their patients is vital to the provision of healthcare services. EI significantly impacts this connection via many mechanisms. Empathy, a fundamental element of EI, helps nurses comprehend and establish a rapport with the emotional experiences of their patients. This comprehension enables nurses to provide heightened levels of empathy and individualised attention, recognising the affective dimensions of a patient's overall health.(26) Moreover, the practice of active listening, which is founded upon the principles of empathy and self-regulation, enables nurses to not only perceive auditory information from their patients but also comprehend their underlying and unexpressed anxieties. Research has shown that patients who perceive that their nurses actively listen to them and comprehend their concerns are more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction and demonstrate greater adherence to their prescribed treatment regimens. Furthermore, the importance of proficient communication cannot be overstated in the context of patient education, fostering cooperation with the healthcare team, and effectively

resolving patient concerns.(10) The possession of a high EI by nurses facilitates their ability to effectively convey intricate medical information to patients and their families in an easily understandable manner.

Communication and trust

For nurses and patients to develop and remain trustworthy, EI is essential. Nurses who connect with patients on a human level, speak honestly, and show empathy have a higher chance of earning their confidence. In order to improve clinical results and help patients feel safe and confident in the treatment they get, trust built via empathy is crucial.(26) High EI nurses are better at handling patient problems, finding solutions, and offering emotional support. Patients value nurses who can clearly and empathetically interact with them. Emotionally intelligent communication reduces the possibility of errors and problems by preventing misunderstandings and miscommunications.

Patient satisfaction and outcomes

Patient satisfaction is a notable indicator of the quality of nursing care that is delivered. A strong relationship has been demonstrated by several research studies among EI of nurses, patient satisfaction and health outcomes.(27) Patients who experience care from emotionally intelligent nurses report higher levels of satisfaction. They feel better understood, respected, and supported throughout their healthcare journey. Improved patient outcomes are a result of EI. Nurses who can attend to their patients' emotional and psychological needs in addition to their physical demands often see a speedier rate of recovery and improved overall health in their patients. Strong EI nurses are able to help patients emotionally, reducing stress and anxiety and promoting faster healing.

Developing EI in Nursing Education

Training and Education

Learning EI at the undergraduate level can help nursing students to manage emotions and thoughts in any circumstances during clinical placements. A nursing student who has improved EI can have a good therapeutic relationship with patients, making their clinical placement a success.(28) Therefore, nursing students should improve their emotional skills as they will be nurses shortly.(29)

In the traditional nursing curricula, much gravity was put on testing the theoretical and practical knowledge of nursing-related subjects. However, in the current context, there is a growing concern about examining the skills of the students related to EI.(1) Scientifically, EI has proven to have a highly positive impact on creating a wholesome nursing undergraduate who would excel in his or her overall performance both in academic and clinical settings. Hence, incorporating EI into the nursing curriculum has multiple benefits to upgrade the quality and the standards of nursing education.(30) Therefore, EI has become a key determinant of the academic and professional success of nursing students at present.

Incorporating EI into Curricula

Nursing study programmes should consider integrating EI training into their curricula via coursework, workshops, and experiential learning activities that teach students how to recognize, understand, and manage emotions. Through them EI nursing students will be able to engage in high levels of meaningful communication and it becomes very useful as they are expected to play diverse roles as caregivers, nurse educators, health promoters as well as counsellors. When they become nurses, they will be sensible and have a strong sense of empathy in dealing with patients as well as their family members. Further, they need to be motivated and determined to achieve their professional success. Nursing students are expected to have a high degree of perseverance in overcoming the challenges that they come across both in academic and clinical settings. Moreover, nursing students should be able to provide psychological empowerment for the patients to achieve emotional stability after traumatic experiences.

The EI of the nursing students has a direct influence on their clinical performance. A cross-sectional observational study carried out in China among nursing interns indicated that EI is essential to enhance the clinical performance of nursing students. EI training should focus on facilitating thought and managing emotions. It is also necessary for educators to consider the context of nursing students and the characteristics of schools.(31)

Continuing Education

In addition, researchers and lecturers need to focus on empowering EI in nursing to improve the nursing profession.(1) When the students become competent

through their exposure and enhancement of their EI, they will engage in creative and innovative research, and it will sustain nursing education tremendously. Henceforth, they will follow the same research culture when they become nurses. Healthcare organisations can provide ongoing EI training and professional development opportunities for nurses. These programmes can focus on practical skills, such as active listening, conflict resolution, and empathy. Encouraging mentorship and coaching can be a valuable way to support EI development. Experienced nurses can guide newer ones in applying EI principles in real-world nursing practice.

Conclusion

EI is a fundamental component in cultivating a patient-centred approach, as evidenced by its significance in patient-nurse interactions, collaboration, personal and professional development, and stress management. Utilising Daniel Goleman's five-component model as its foundation, the theoretical framework provides a thorough manual for comprehending and enhancing EI in nursing. The systematic integration of EI into nursing curricula is imperative, given the recognition of its significance in addressing challenges, fostering trust, and enhancing patient satisfaction. In addition, continuous commitment to mentoring and continuing education programmes is essential for fostering and maintaining the EI of nurses, which ultimately contributes to the improvement of healthcare outcomes and services. EI is fundamentally a transformative factor that enables nurses to effectively navigate the intricacies of their vocation while exhibiting qualities such as compassion, resilience, and excellence; consequently, it enhances the overall healthcare environment.

Declarations

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to be addressed regarding this case report.

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