The Interrelationships Between Emotional Intelligence, Stress, and Coping Strategies Among Undergraduate Nursing Students

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Disclosures

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Objectives:
This study was conducted to measure the levels of EI, perceived stress and psychological distress of the participants; to identify the usual coping strategies the participants tend to utilize in stressful situations; and, to examine the interrelationships between emotional intelligence, stress, psychological distress and coping strategies of undergraduate nursing students

Conflict of interest:
All authors declare no conflict of interest

Sponsorship
None
Emotional Intelligence is said to be the capacity of an individual to “monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and action” (Salovey, Peter & Mayer, 1990, p. 189)

EI focuses on the recognition of people’s emotional state which can assist in regulating behaviours and solving problems (Salovey, Peter & Mayer, 1990)

Individuals who can accurately express their emotions can easily recognise and handle them appropriately, making it easier to convey emotions to others (Salovey, Peter & Mayer, 1990)
Stress is a psychological response where an individual may view something as potentially threatening (Day & Livingstone, 2003). According to Lazarus and Folkman, it has a ‘particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being’ (1984, p. 19).

With stress, there is always a demand for the body to adapt and re-establish its normal function regardless of the cause of the demand (Selye, 1973). Therefore, stress is a response rather than a stimulus.
Coping Strategies

Coping is defined as the person's “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding” the person’s resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 141)

Coping strategies refer to ‘how individuals manage the demand of stressful events’ (Montes-Berges & Augusto, 2007, p. 2)
Methodology

- Descriptive correlational design
- Self-report questionnaires
- Inclusion criteria:
  - At least 18 y/o
  - Either 2nd or 3rd yr undergraduate nursing students
  - Currently enrolled in the course and in the university where data was collected.
- Data analysis
  - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis (IBM® SPSS® Statistics v23.0)
Results

- **Emotional Intelligence** \((M = 123.87, \ SD = 12.48)\)
- **Perceived Stress** \((M = 20.55, \ SD = 6.06)\)
- **Psychological Distress** \((M = 14.28, \ SD = 4.91)\)
- **Coping Strategies**
  - Engagement Coping Strategies \((M = 56.33, \ SD = 10.27)\)
  - Disengagement Coping Strategies \((M = 46.29, \ SD = 11.36)\)
Results, continued

- **EI and engagement coping strategies**
  \( r = .55, p = < .001 \)

- **Disengagement coping strategies and perceived stress**
  \( r = .57, p = < .001 \)

- **Disengagement coping strategies and psychological distress**
  \( r = .47, p = < .001 \)

- **Perceived stress and psychological distress**
  \( r = .61, p = < .001 \)
Results, continued

- Engagement coping strategies explained 26.2% \((F = 46.05, p = <.001)\) variance for EI

- 32.6% of disengagement coping strategies explained the variance for perceived stress \((F = 45.3, p = <.001)\) and 21.3% for psychological distress \((F = 26.3, p = < .001)\)

- 38.2% of perceived stress explained the variance for psychological distress \((F = 30, p = < .001)\)
Implications

- A healthy **EI level** helps manage stress \cite{Landa2008}, and improve coping strategies \cite{Ciarrochi2002,Schutte2002}.

- Improving the **EI level** of UGNS can assist them cope with environmental demands, improve mood and self-esteem in stressful situation \cite{Ciarrochi2002,Schutte2002}.
Emotional Intelligence

Increased Team Performance

Increased Leadership Ability

Decreased Occupational Stress

Improved Decision Making

Reduced Staff Turnover

Increased Personal Well-Being

Increased Team Performance
Implications, continued

- **Stress** and **psychological distress** can adversely affect not only the students’ health, but their academic performance.
Effects of Stress on the Human Body
**Brain:** Headache, migraine

**Lungs:** Difficulty breathing, asthma attacks

**Liver:** Fatty liver

**Pancreas:** Diabetes

**Kidney:** Adrenaline

**Heart:** Heart attack, hypertension, stroke

**Stomach:** Aches, nausea, vomiting

**Intestines:** Diarrhoea

**Nervous System:** Fight, flight, freeze

**Muscles & joints:** Aches & tensions

**Reproductive system:** Painful or irregular periods
Implications, continued

- The identification of **stress** and **distress** may provide an opportunity to intervene, and this may positively affect student retention and improve academic performance.
Nurse count per 1000 population (2011)

- Switzerland
- United States
- Australia
- Canada
- United Kingdom
- Mexico
Future of Nursing, continued

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Conclusion

- This study confirmed that relationships between emotional intelligence, coping strategies, stress and psychological distress exist.
- Causes of stress and/or psychological distress must be examined thoroughly so that strategies can be developed to ensure enhanced academic performance for the students.
- Knowing causes of stress and distress of student cohorts may provide opportunity to intervene, which may positively affect student retention, health and well-being.
That's all folks
You've been a good audience


Health Workforce Australia 2014: Australia’s Future Health Workforce – Nurses Overview


