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Emotional Intelligence: Why It Should be Included in Baccalaureate Education Curricula

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Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as “the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (Mayer & Salovey, 1990, p.5). Emotional Intelligence is considered an important characteristic of nurses that can affect the quality of patient care and clinical practice. Nursing research has shown that there is a significant positive correlation between EI and nursing performance (Codier & Codier, 2017). Emotional Intelligence has also been shown to effect critical thinking and clinical judgement abilities (Kaya, Şenyuva, & Bodur, 2017; Sharon & Grinberg, 2018). These relational abilities are crucial due to the complexities nurses encounter in caring for individuals who are emotionally exposed due to physical or mental illness (Foster, Fethney, McKenzie, Fisher, Harkness, & Kozlowski 2017).

Baccalaureate nursing education is designed to facilitate the development of caring as translated into affective characteristics of professional values, such as altruism, autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and social justice (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2008). Nursing programs introduce students to the necessary content and clinical application to be a successful nurse. The question is: Are nurse educators fostering growth of Emotional Intelligence? Nursing graduates must not only be competent in technical and critical thinking skills, but also be equipped to manage the emotions of patients, caregivers, and other professionals working to ensure optimal patient outcomes (Shanta & Gargiulo, 2014; Senyuva, Kaya, Isik, & Bodur, 2014). A study by Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, et al. (2014) states that health professional students with higher EI scores reported less perceived stress and higher levels of life satisfaction. Research in nursing practice links increased EI scores to effective leadership roles (Codier, 2014). However, there is minimal research on the relationship between EI and baccalaureate nursing education.

The purpose of this presentation is to disseminate the findings of a research study conducted to determine if baccalaureate nursing students measured EI changed while in the professional nursing program. A quantitative longitudinal design was used to compare the EI scores of nursing students in the second semester of the professional, upper division, baccalaureate nursing program and again in the fifth semester (final semester) of the program. The instrument used to measure emotional intelligence for this study was the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) which is an ability measure. The MSCEIT measures EI ability and therefore results are based on the actual ability of executing a task and not only on the belief in such an ability. The

reliability and validity of the instrument for the total EI score is $r = .93$. The overall findings of the longitudinal study revealed EI decreased over the course of a baccalaureate program. Statistically significant decreases were found in the EI subscales of perceiving emotions and managing emotions. Two other subscales, understanding and facilitating emotions, were measured and a decrease was found, however it was not statistically significant. This is a troubling finding that urges intervention.

Baccalaureate nursing programs are primarily focused on student's cognitive abilities which can result in cognitive overload. Focusing on students' emotional abilities are often overlooked, but research shows these abilities are critical in the nursing profession and should be scaffolded throughout nursing education programs (Foster et al., 2017). The findings of this longitudinal study support integration of EI content into baccalaureate curricula. Utilizing the Ability Model EI framework may facilitate synthesis and application of EI concepts in nursing education. This framework reflects four abilities (subscales): a) perception of emotion; b) facilitation of emotion c) understanding and analyzing emotions, and d) management of emotion. These EI concepts could be incorporated in the nursing curricula using various active learning strategies. This presentation will further discuss the application of each EI concept and the impact it has on nursing education.

Title:

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References:

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Abstract Summary:

This presentation will include findings from a quantitative longitudinal study that examined the measured Emotional Intelligence scores of baccalaureate nursing students at the beginning and end of a professional program. Findings indicate Emotional Intelligence content is critical in nursing education.

Content Outline:

1. Introduction
1. Define Emotional Intelligence (EI)
2. Discuss critical behaviors in baccalaureate education
2. Body
 1. Discuss methods used to conduct research study.
 2. Discuss the EI instrument utilized in this study (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT))
 3. Discuss findings of a research study conducted to determine if baccalaureate nursing students measured EI changed while in the professional nursing program
3. Conclusion
 1. Discuss the application of EI concepts
 2. Discuss the importance of integrating EI into baccalaureate nursing curricula

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