Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance Among Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic performance among 200 undergraduate nursing students at a private college in Thrissur, Kerala. The research was guided by five key objectives: (1) To assess the level of emotional intelligence among undergraduate nursing students in a selected college in Kerala, (2) To assess the academic performance of the undergraduate nursing students based on their recent semester grades, (3) To assess the correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among the students, (4) To find the association between emotional intelligence and demographic variables of the nursing students, and (5) To find the association between academic performance and demographic variables of the nursing students. Utilizing a purposive sampling technique, the researchers measured EI through Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) and evaluated academic performance measured by Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of latest university semester results. Statistical analysis revealed that majority of students possessed moderate (41.5%) to high (53.5%) levels of EI and performed well in university examinations. However, results indicated only a weak positive correlation (r = 0.092) between EI and academic success. Regarding demographics, EI was significantly associated with gender, family type, and extracurricular involvement, whereas academic performance was linked to age and year of study. Variables such as birth order and parental education showed no significant relationship. The study concludes that while direct numerical correlation is modest, integrating emotional intelligence training into nursing curricula remains essential to enhance academic success and foster professional resilience in clinical practice.

Key words: Correlation, Emotional intelligence, Academic performance, Undergraduate nursing students, Private nursing college.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016)[1]. In nursing, EI is vital due to frequent exposure to stressful and emotionally demanding situations, supporting communication, empathy, emotional regulation, clinical decision-making, and stress management for quality patient care.

While nursing education traditionally emphasizes cognitive skills, increasing importance is being given to EI as a non-cognitive factor influencing student success. Studies show that EI improves stress coping, interpersonal relationships, and clinical adaptation (Codier et al., 2011)[2]. However, its relationship with academic performance remains under continued investigation.

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Statement of the problem

A study to assess the correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing students in a selected private nursing college in Thrissur District.

Need and significance of the study:

Despite the importance of Emotional

Intelligence (EI) in nursing, admissions still rely mainly on academic scores, often overlooking emotional and interpersonal skills. A 2021 study in the Asia-Pacific Journal of Oncology Nursing found no significant relationship between academic performance and EI, highlighting gaps in selection methods.[3] This study was prompted by observations that academically strong students may struggle in emotionally demanding clinical settings, while others with higher EI perform better. Exploring this relationship may support more holistic admission policies and help develop emotionally resilient and academically competent nursing graduates.

Objectives:

- To assess the level of emotional
- intelligence among undergraduate nursing students in a selected college in Kerala
- To assess the academic performance of the undergraduate nursing students based on their recent semester grades
- To assess the correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among the students
- To find the association between emotional intelligence and demographic variables of the nursing students
- To find the association between academic performance and demographic variables of the nursing students.

Hypothesis:

H_0 (null hypothesis): There is no significant correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing students.

H_1 (alternate hypothesis): There is a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sabina Joshi, Suzanna Mukhia, and Ambika Chand (2023) found a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing students ($r = 0.583$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher emotional intelligence is associated with better academic performance.[4]

Almegewly et al. (2020) found a statistically significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement among undergraduate nursing students ($r = 0.279$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher emotional intelligence is associated with better academic performance.[5]

K. Ramesh Kumar and S. Indira (2019) reported a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance among nursing students ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher EI, especially in adaptability and interpersonal domains, is associated with better academic performance.[6] Nikhilesh Singh et al. (2020) found consistent positive correlations between emotional intelligence and academic/clinical performance among healthcare students, ranging from $r = 0.20$ to $r = 0.45$, indicating that higher EI is associated with improved communication skills, clinical competence, and overall professional performance.[7]

Mérida-López S and Extremera N (2017) found significant positive correlations between emotional intelligence and work engagement ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$) and leadership effectiveness ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$) among nursing professionals, indicating that higher emotional intelligence is associated with greater engagement and stronger leadership behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach: Quantitative Research Approach **Research design**:

Descriptive Correlational Research Design **Setting of the study**:

The study will be conducted in a selected nursing college in Thrissur District **Population:**

The population selected for the study is undergraduate nursing students studying in Thrissur District **Sample size:**

The sample will be 200 Undergraduate students based on sampling criteria. **Sampling techniques**

Purposive sampling will be used for the study.

Criteria for Sample Selection

Inclusion Criteria:

- Students currently enrolled in 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Semester of B.Sc. Nursing
- Students willing to participate and provide academic score details
- Students available during the time of data collection

Exclusion Criteria:

- Students who are unwilling to participate
- Students who have not yet received their latest academic scores
- Students with diagnosed emotional or learning disorders (self-reported)

Data Sources

Data were collected from primary sources using a quantitative descriptive correlational design. The study included 200 undergraduate nursing students selected through purposive sampling at St. James' College of Nursing, Chalakudy, Thrissur district. Tools used included a demographic proforma, an academic data sheet for collecting personal details and recent university examination scores, and the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) to assess emotional intelligence. The data captured students' emotional intelligence levels perceiving, managing, and regulating emotions- along with their corresponding academic performance based on CGPA.

Tools used:

To achieve the study's aim, a tool consisting of two parts was used:

Part 1: Sociodemographic and Academic Data Sheet

This self-report questionnaire collected data on students' age, gender, year of study, residence, Family Type, Birth Order, parental education, physical health status, and academic performance, including Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)

Part 2: Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT)

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This instrument contains 33 items and each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total possible score ranges from 33 to 165, with higher scores indicating higher emotional intelligence. Some negatively worded items are reverse-scored.

Total Score Range	Level of Emotional Intelligence
33–77	Low Emotional Intelligence
78–121	Moderate Emotional Intelligence
122–165	High Emotional Intelligence

Statistical Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics:

- The descriptive statistics like frequency and percentages are used to describe the sociodemographic variables of the sample and the level of emotional intelligence.
- Chi-square test is used to find the association between emotional intelligence and demographic variables, as well as the association between academic performance and demographic variables of nursing students.
- The inferential statistics like Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic performance among undergraduate nursing students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Section 1: Distribution of Emotional Intelligence levels among nursing students

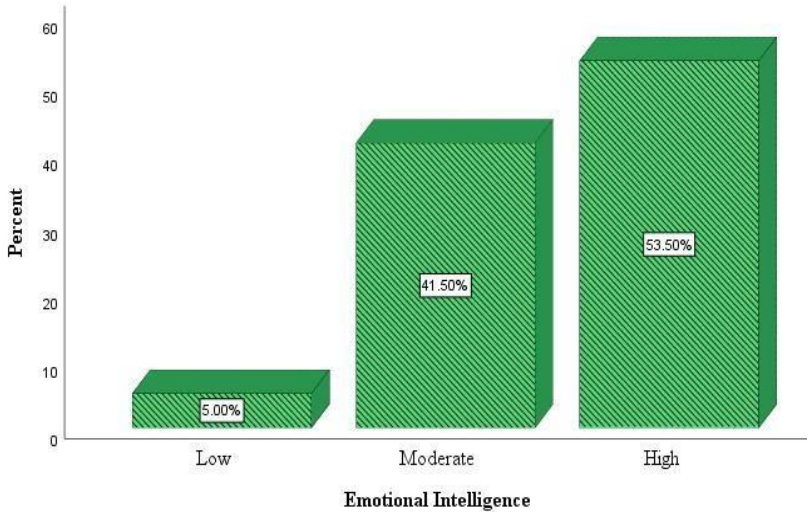


Figure 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of Emotional Intelligence levels among nursing students

The figure 1 shows that, among 200 samples, 53.5% had high emotional intelligence, 41.5% had moderate emotional intelligence and 5% had low emotional intelligence. This indicates that the majority of the samples in the study had moderate-high levels of emotional intelligence.

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Section 2: Distribution of Academic Performance Among Nursing Students

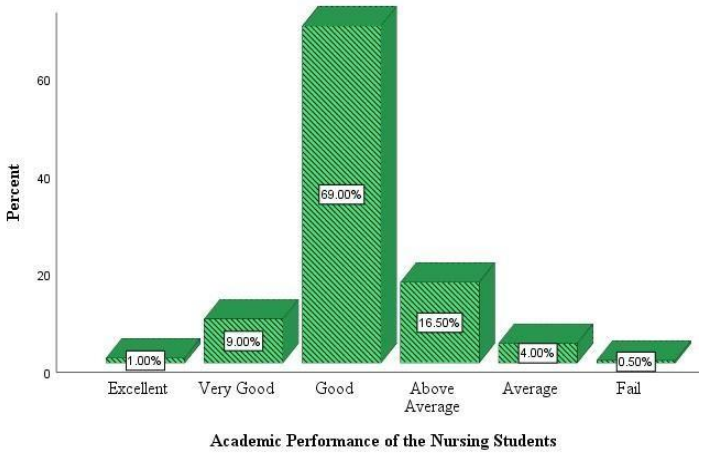


Figure 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of Academic Performance Among Nursing Students

The figure 2 illustrates the academic performance of 200 nursing students. Among them, 1% achieved excellent academic performance, 9% very good, 69% good, 16.5% above average, 4% average, and 0.5% failed. This indicates that the majority of students demonstrated good academic performance.

Section 3: Association of emotional intelligence of nursing students with selected demographic variables.

The association between participants' demographic and personal characteristics and their emotional intelligence which was analyzed using the chi-square test. Age did not demonstrate a statistically significant association with emotional intelligence ($\chi^2 = 5.783$, df = 6, $p > 0.05$), with the majority of participants across all age categories exhibiting moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence. Gender showed a significant association ($\chi^2 = 6.130$, df = 2, $p = 0.047$), with female participants presenting higher emotional intelligence scores compared to males. Birth order was not significantly associated with emotional intelligence ($\chi^2 = 1.601$, df = 4, $p = 0.809$), indicating similar levels across first-born, second-born, and other categories. Year of study did not have a significant relationship with emotional intelligence ($\chi^2 = 2.812$, df = 6, $p = 0.832$), with comparable levels observed across all academic years. Residence status was also not significantly associated ($\chi^2 = 2.567$, df = 4, $p = 0.633$), whereas family type was significantly associated with emotional intelligence ($\chi^2 = 13.869$, df = 4, $p = 0.008$), with students from nuclear families exhibiting higher scores than those from joint or three-generation families. Parental educational level did not show significant associations, with father's education ($\chi^2 = 9.109$, df = 6, $p = 0.168$) and mother's education ($\chi^2 = 3.167$, df = 6, $p = 0.788$) not influencing emotional intelligence outcomes. Physical health status of participants was not significantly related ($\chi^2 = 1.058$, df = 2, $p = 0.589$). Participation in extra-curricular activities was significantly associated with higher emotional intelligence ($\chi^2 = 6.928$, df = 2, $p = 0.031$). Formal training in emotional intelligence did not reach statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 5.267$, df = 2, $p = 0.072$), although participants who received training exhibited marginally higher emotional intelligence levels. These findings suggest that gender, family type, participation in extra-curricular activities may influence emotional intelligence levels among the participants.

Section 4: Association of academic performance of nursing students with selected demographic variables.

The association between the participants' academic performance and their demographic characteristics which was analyzed using the chi-square test. Age demonstrated a highly significant statistical association with academic performance ($\chi^2 = 66.954$, df = 15, $p < 0.001$), with the majority of "Good" performers concentrated in the 20–22 years age bracket. Similarly, year of study showed a highly significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 81.896$, df = 50, $p < 0.001$), indicating that academic achievement levels vary significantly as students' progress through the nursing curriculum. In contrast, gender did not show a significant

association with academic performance ($\chi^2 = 6.584$, df = 5, p = 0.253), suggesting comparable achievement levels between male and female students**.** Birth order was not significantly associated with academic outcomes ($\chi^2 = 2.888$, df = 10, p = 0.984), showing similar grade distributions across all categories. Residence status also showed no significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 10.782$, df = 10, p = 0.375). Family type approached but did not reach statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 17.378$, df = 10, p = 0.060). Parental education levels did not influence academic outcomes, as seen in both father's education ($\chi^2 = 14.883$, df = 15, p = 0.460) and mother's education ($\chi^2 = 13.301$, df = 15, p = 0.579). Furthermore, the physical health status of participants ($\chi^2 = 7.959$, df = 5, p = 0.159), participation in extracurricular activities ($\chi^2 = 5.244$, df = 5, p = 0.387), and formal training in emotional intelligence ($\chi^2 = 3.962$, df = 5, p = 0.555) were not significantly related to academic performance. These findings suggest, only age and year of study serve as significant determinants of academic performance in studied demographics.

Section 5: Correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance

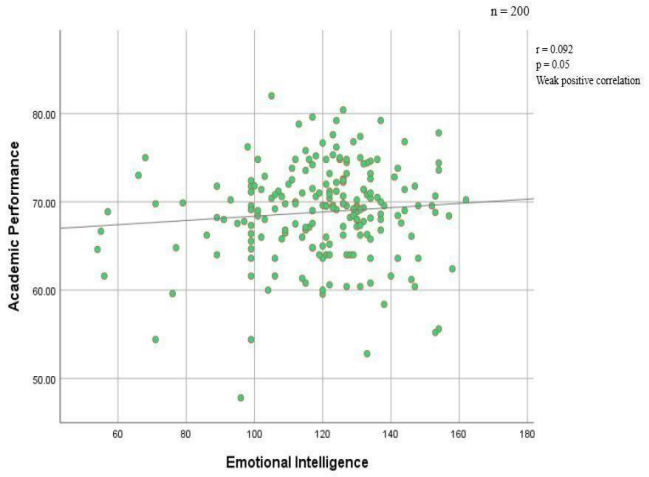


Figure 3: Correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance

The data presented in the figure 3 shows weak positive relationship between academic performance and emotional intelligence. This indicates that as emotional intelligence increases, academic performance tends to increase slightly; however, the relationship is very weak.

DISCUSSION

Section 1: Findings related to distribution of demographic variables The demographic profile of the present study, with most participants aged 20–22 years (54%) and predominantly female (90.5%), is consistent with findings reported by Almegewly[5] and Shubayr and Dailah.[9] The majority of students residing in their own homes (67%) and belonging to nuclear families (94%) reflects a stable background, which Naushad10 identified as influential in both emotional intelligence and academic performance. Most participants (81.5%) reported good health, supporting the health–performance association highlighted in the systematic review by Sutil-Rodríguez.[11] A notable finding is that 90% of students had received formal emotional intelligence training, which differs from the population in Singh's study[12] and may indicate higher emotional competence and resilience, as supported by Lau and Ang[13] in relation to reduced academic stress and psychological distress. Additionally, parental education levels observed align with the contextual factors influencing academic performance described by Nguyen[14].

Section 2: Findings related to level of emotional Intelligence among nursing students

In the present study, 53.5% of students had high emotional intelligence, 41.5% had moderate emotional intelligence, and 5% had low emotional intelligence, indicating an overall moderate to high level of EI. In comparison, Sabina Joshi et al. reported that 76.5% of students had average EI, 18.5% had high EI, and 5%

had low EI.[4] Although both studies show that most students fall within the moderate or average range, the present study recorded a higher proportion of students with high emotional intelligence.

Section 3: Findings related to the academic performance of nursing students

In the present study, 69% of students demonstrated good academic performance, with fewer students achieving very good or excellent grades. In contrast, Sabina Joshi et al. reported that 51.3% of students had excellent academic performance, indicating comparatively higher academic achievement in their study.[4] Regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance, the present study found a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.092$) between the two variables.

Section 4: Association between demographic variables and emotional intelligence

Sabina Joshi et al. reported no significant association between emotional intelligence and sociodemographic variables.[4] In contrast, the present study found significant associations of emotional intelligence with gender, family type, and participation in extracurricular activities.

Section 5: Association between demographic variables and academic performance

The study found a highly significant association between academic performance and age ($p < 0.001$) as well as year of study ($p < 0.001$), supporting findings by Marvos and Hale[15], which highlight the progressive improvement in competence as students advance through the nursing curriculum. **Section 6: Assess the correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance**

The present study found a weak positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance ($r = 0.092$). In comparison, Joshi (2023) reported a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.583$, $p < 0.001$).[4] While both studies indicate a positive relationship, the strength of association was considerably higher in the Nepal study than in the present study.

IMPORTANT FINDINGS

- Majority of the participants were female students aged 20–22 years.
- Most students belonged to nuclear families and lived in their own houses.
- More than half of the students (53.5%) had high emotional intelligence, while 41.5% had moderate emotional intelligence.
- The majority of students (69%) had good academic performance.
- Gender, family type and participation in extracurricular activities showed significant association with emotional intelligence.
- Age and year of study showed significant association with academic performance.
- There was a weak positive correlation ($r = 0.092$) between emotional intelligence and academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educational institutions should design structured emotional intelligence training programs. These programs may include workshops on stress management, communication skills, empathy development, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills to enhance both emotional competence and academic outcomes.
- Comparative studies should be conducted among the 2nd semester, 4th semester, 6th semester and 7th semester students to examine whether emotional intelligence improves with academic exposure and experience.
- Future studies should be conducted in different colleges, universities, and academic disciplines. Comparing students from various educational backgrounds will provide broader insights and improve the applicability of findings across different settings.

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- It is recommended that researchers use well-established and standardized emotional intelligence assessment tools with proven reliability and validity. Proper tool selection ensures accurate measurement of emotional intelligence components such as self-awareness, empathy, motivation, and social skills.

Implications of the Study

Implications for Nursing Education

- The study encourages nursing educators to incorporate emotional skill-building activities (like reflective exercises, peer collaboration, and role plays) into the teaching learning process.
- Faculty can use the findings to identify students with low EI and provide additional guidance, counselling, or mentorship.

Implications for Curriculum Development

- Based on the findings, emotional intelligence training modules (e.g., stress management, empathy, self-awareness) can be integrated into the nursing curriculum.

Implications for Student Support Services

- The study may support the introduction of counselling services, peer support groups, and emotional wellness programs in nursing colleges.
- Results can inform faculty advisors, parents and student counsellors about the need to assess and support emotional and academic well-being together.

Implications for Practice

- Nurses with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle clinical stress, provide empathetic care, and maintain effective communication with patients and healthcare teams.
- Strengthening EI during nursing education can contribute to improved professional behaviour and patient outcomes in future nursing practice.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- Performance is affected by many variables such as teaching methods, intelligence quotient (IQ), socio-economic status, family background, stress levels, and motivation, which Academic may not be fully controlled.
- Different tools used to assess emotional intelligence may vary in reliability and validity.
- Different emotional intelligence scales measure different components of EI (such as self-awareness, empathy, or social skills). The reliability and validity of the tool used may influence the findings. If the tool is not standardized for the specific population, the results may not be completely accurate

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and academic performance among 200 undergraduate nursing students. Findings showed that most students had moderate to high EI (95%) and generally good academic performance. However, the correlation between EI and academic achievement was weak and positive ($r = 0.092$), indicating a limited direct relationship. Emotional intelligence was significantly associated with gender and extracurricular activities, while academic performance was influenced by age and year of study. Overall, although EI is not a strong predictor of grades, it remains an important competency for nursing, supporting the need to integrate EI training into the curriculum to enhance both academic development and clinical readiness.

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