

Emotional Abilities Among Undergraduate Students of Health Care Professional and Non-professional Courses

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Abstract

Emotional Intelligence (EI) also refers to the ability of an individual to perceive, understand, and manage own emotions and others' emotions. Research reported that individuals with higher EI have better social skills, management skills and effective communication. Education is the most impacting factor in children as they grow and mature by learning new things from the surroundings and academics which influences EI of an individual. Studies on education and emotional intelligence were often seen. Though there is certain relationship between education and EI, studies related to emotional intelligence in health care professions are scanty. Thus, the present study was planned to study the emotional intelligence in professional undergraduate students and compare it between different professional fields.. A study involving 170 undergraduate students who volunteered was conducted, and these participants were separated into two distinct groups. Group 1 consists of 80 professional course students of first to final year from Speech and Hearing physiotherapy and Ayurveda medicine disciplines. From each class, 20 participants participated in the study. Group 2 consists of 90 non-professional course students from first to final year of arts discipline and 30 students from each year participated in the study. The current study utilizes the Schutte Self-reported Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) for the evaluation of emotional intelligence. The results showed highest scores in managing others' emotions for both the groups. Similarly, the least scores were observed in emotion perception. However, Group 1 participants showed slightly higher scores in all the domains than Group 2 participants. The present study showed professional course students with higher emotional intelligence than non-professional students.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, professional courses, health professionals, adolescents, self-reported emotional intelligence, managing others' emotions, effective communication

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) can be generally defined as the capability of an individual to processes various emotions by deciphering, using, monitoring, perceiving, understanding, and not just managing/regulating but also handling those feelings and thereby evaluating them.

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Emotional intelligence is also defined as an individual's capacity to recognize, comprehend, and effectively regulate both their own emotions and the emotions of others. Research reported that individuals with higher EI have better social skills, management skills and effective communication. Research has also indicated that individuals possessing elevated emotional intelligence tend to achieve greater success in both their personal and professional endeavors [1]. EI helps for decision making, understanding the facts and handle the

situations effectively with thoughtful decisions and intelligence. Over the decades, studies on EI are extensive in understanding the relationship between EI and human behavior. Hence, research on emotional intelligence has great importance in all the aspects of individual lives. Research on EI is significant for several reasons. Emotions play an important role in shaping behavior, emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills [2]. EI can increase the awareness and understanding of various domains in life like mental health, personal relationships and career success. Thus, research studies on EI provide an insight in the field of education, healthcare, and profession. Education and EI has a greater relationship.

Education is the most impacting factor in children as they grow and mature by learning new things from the surroundings and academics which influences EI of an individual [3]. Similarly, Health professions are vital care providers and service-oriented individuals, the aptitude, mental health, and personality will be definitely reflecting on emotional intelligence. All health care providers develop relationship with patients and their emotions. The development of appropriate relationship with the patients and their caregivers to a professional is essential and thus, it will be associated with EI. Thus, it is critical for students of health professions to have emotional intelligence for better- and high-quality care in their clinical practice. Emotional intelligence is very important for both Professional and non-professional students, as it has an impact on their academic success, personal relationships, and overall wellbeing. Studies have reported that the EI of professional and non-professional students have an impact from various aspects like personal circumstances, stress, technology, learning, training exposure, resources and socio economic status. Researchers suggest that the emotional wellbeing of students should be higher to succeed in their education, profession and overall wellbeing.

Studies on education and emotional intelligence were often seen. Though there is certain relationship between education and EI, studies related to emotional intelligence in health care professions are scanty in Indian scenario. Studies on EI using Schutte's test are very limited and thus the present study uses Schutte's test for emotional intelligence. There is also limited research findings reported in comparing undergraduate professional and nonprofessional course students. Thus, the present study was planned to study the emotional intelligence in professional undergraduate students and compare it between different professional fields. The study also aims at investigating the effect of year of study and emotional intelligence in under graduate students.

METHOD

Participants

The present cross sectional study design was carried out by obtaining Institution ethical clearance and consent from each participant. A total of 170 volunteer undergraduate students participated in the study (Females: 123, Male: 47). The participants were divided into two groups. Group 1 consisted of 80 professional course students of first to final year from Speech and Hearing physiotherapy and Ayurveda medicine disciplines. From each class, 20 participants participated in the study. Group 2 consisted of 90 non-professional course students from first to final year of arts discipline and 30 students from each year participated in the study.

Participants attending the course with good scholastic performance and knowledge of English were included between the ages of 18 and 23 years. All the participants were residents of Karnataka state since schooling and attended formal education. Exclusion criteria for the study encompassed individuals enrolled in diploma and vocational courses, as well as those facing challenges in reading and writing English. Additionally, students with any hearing, psychological, neurological, or other medical issues were not considered for participation.

MATERIAL

The current study utilizes the Schutte Self-reported Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT), which is an emotional intelligence scale created by Schutte *et al.* in 1998. It is designed to assess the emotional

intelligence of the general population and provides a good index of emotional intelligence of an individual. This scale consists of Four dimensions, which are: Emotion Perception, Utilizing Emotions, Managing Self emotions, and Managing Others' Emotions. The scale comprises 33 items, with three of them being reverse scored. Respondents provide self-reports on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 signifies strong agreement; the reverse-scored items are 5, 28, and 33. Scores on the scale range from 33 to 165, with higher scores reflecting greater emotional intelligence or more pronounced emotional intelligence traits, as per the work of Schutte *et al.* in 1998.

PROCEDURE

A total of 33 questions of SSEIT were converted to Google forms and link was generated. The evaluator personally attended the colleges, providing instructions to each class of students regarding the study, and subsequently, participants were chosen based on adherence to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected participants were provided the Google form questions and instructed to fill in the responses within a given time. The responses obtained from all the participants were carefully analyzed for all the four domains of the test by an experienced clinical psychologist and tabulated for suitable statistical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The gathered responses from participants were organized and subjected to analysis. Scores for each section of the questionnaire were computed individually. The highest scores were seen in managing others' emotions for both the groups. Similarly, the least scores were observed in emotion perception. However, Group 1 participants showed slightly higher scores in all the domains than Group 2 participants. The scores of each domain for both the groups are shown in Figure 1.

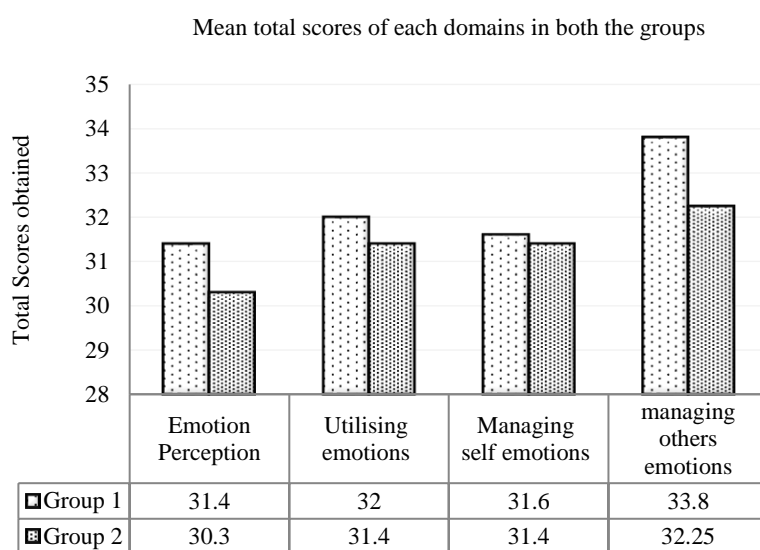


Figure 1. Mean total Scores of four domains of the questionnaire in both the groups.

The collected responses from the participants were tabulated and subjected to suitable statistical analysis using IBM SPSS 20 software. The data were subjected to normality check using Shapiro wilk test. The results suggest that the data were normally distributed. The mean score obtained in all the four domains of undergraduate students of professional courses were slightly higher than undergraduate students of non-professional courses. However, the parametric analysis of the data using paired t test showed no significant difference between the groups ($p > 0.05$) and comparison of each domain between the groups were also found to be non-significant ($p > 0.05$).

The study was carried out by incorporating the students of all the years of the under graduation. Thus, to validate the relationship between year of study and emotional intelligence the scores of each domain

were analyzed separately using appropriate statistical test. The findings indicated a notable discrepancy in the academic year distribution between undergraduate students pursuing professional courses and those in non-professional courses. The scores obtained reported that managing others' emotions was higher in both the groups and least scores were observed in emotional perception across the years. There is an increasing trend of scores observed as year of study increases in both groups across the domains. The results suggest that as they come to upper grade of their studies showing better or higher scores in these domains.

The outcomes additionally indicated a significant distinction in the comparison between the first and third years ($p=0.03$), first and fourth years ($p=0.01$), and second and fourth years ($p=0.05$). However, there was no significant difference noticed between year 1 and 2, year 2 and 3, and year 3 and 4 ($p>0.05$) in group 1. Similarly, there was a significant difference reported between years 1 and 3 ($p=0.04$).

Nevertheless, no significant distinction was observed between the first and second years and between the second and third years ($p>0.05$) within group 2. The scores obtained from the participants of both the groups are tabulated in Table 1. However, the interaction between the year of study and groups were not significant.

The results of the present study suggested that the under-graduation students of professional course had higher scores indicating higher emotional intelligence compared to non-professional course students. The emotional intelligence had significant effect on year of study in both the group. Both the group participants showed increasing trend in the emotional intelligence as the year proceeds. As they complete the graduation, the emotional intelligence is showing better scores. Participants in both groups showed fewer responses to utilizing emotions and managing self-emotions. The examination of mental health has been a consistent focus, with its definition evolving over time due to cultural and other variations. Generally, mental health is perceived as a state of psychological or mental well-being [4]. This research investigates the impact of the academic course on mental health, building upon prior studies. Singh and Singh explored stress and adjustment in professional and non-professional students, discovering that professional students exhibited poorer emotional adjustment compared to their non-professional counterparts [5]. Sarode and Tendolkar identified higher emotional intelligence in non-professional undergraduate students than in professional postgraduate students [6]. Pant and Srivastava recently established a positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and mental health among arts and science students, revealing no significant difference in mental health between the two disciplines [7]. This study represents the inaugural effort to examine emotional intelligence in undergraduate students enrolled in both professional and non-professional courses. The reason for the present findings would be the age of an individual and social maturity as they move further in education. Students in the professional courses would have better social exposure and they will be treating patients and having more communication and interaction, which has helped them to improve their emotional intelligence. Some of the earlier studies also support and contradict our findings [8–10].

Table 1. Mean scores obtained in each domain of the questionnaire across the years of study in both the groups.

Year of Study	Emotional Perception		Utilizing emotions		Managing self-emotions		Managing other emotions	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1	Group 2
I Year	30.64	30.64	31.2	30.64	31.8	30.5	32.64	30.7
II Year	30.73	29.75	32.2	30.64	32.9	30.9	32.1	31.6
III Year	30.13	31.2	32.1	32.34	31.26	31.8	34.6	33.04
IV Year	33.36	-	33.73	-	32.26	-	36	-

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study showed professional course students with higher emotional intelligence than nonprofessional students. Emotional intelligence will be better as age increases and there will be a positive influence on education. The emotional intelligence in health care professional course students was slightly higher than non-professional course. The students dealing with other human beings or patients in their daily life require higher emotional intelligence which will be developed during their studies. However irrespective of their career, every individual should have higher emotional intelligence to be an efficient and effective social well-being.

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