Shiraz E-Med J. 2019 April; 20(4):e80275. doi: 10.5812/semj.80275.
Published online 2018 September 16. **Research Article**

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Communication Skills in Healthcare Staff

Mehrvash Amini [1], Mitra Amini [1, *], Parisa Nabiee [1] and Somayeh Delavari [2, 3]

[1] Clinical Education Research Center, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran
[2] Center for Educational Research in Medical Sciences (CERMS), School of Medicine, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
[3] Department of Medical Education, School of Medicine, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

[*] *Corresponding author*: Clinical Education Research Center, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran. Tel: +98-9173132902, Email: mitraamini51@yahoo.com

Received 2018 June 08; **Revised** 2018 August 07; **Accepted** 2018 August 08.

Abstract

Introduction: Emotional intelligence (EI), also known as Emotional Quotient, is defined as an individual's alertness on his or her own emotions, together by an alertness of the emotions in other people and the capacity to manage them and act appropriately.
Objectives: The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the EI (Emotional Intelligence) and communication skills of healthcare staff working at ambulatory clinics in Shiraz.
Methods: 108 healthcare staff was selected using simple random sampling. To assess the EI, a valid and reliable Persian version of Goleman's questionnaire was used. To assess the communication skills, a questionnaire was designed based on previous questionnaires. For each healthcare staff, five patients were selected randomly to complete the questionnaires.
Results: The total score of the EI was 76.49 $\pm$ 2.83 out of 112. The mean total score of the communication skills was 96.80 $\pm$ 11.63 out of 120. There was a significant relationship between the total score of EI and communication skills. The R2 coeffcient was 0.74. There was also a significant relationship between EI dimensions and the total score of communication skills ($P < 0.001$).
Conclusion: Having a higher level of EI leads to better communication with patients and better health outcomes.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Communication Skills, Healthcare Staff

1. Background

According to Goleman, EI (Emotional Intelligence) consists of multidimensional structures including four important parts: Self-awareness, self-regulatory, self-motivation, and communication/relationship management. Self-awareness is the cognition of emotions. Self-regulatory is defined as emotional balance while self-motivation deals with effectiveness (1). Communication/relationship management deals with the cognitive ability to be sympathetic with others, listen deeply, ask the right questions, cooperate, care for, communicate effectively with the patients, and speak eloquently. Patient communication is a necessary skill for healthcare staff. Communication is a two-way method of verbal and nonverbal components. A fair communication can improve patient satisfaction and outcome (2).

It seems that the high level of EI in healthcare staff leads to better communication with the patient. Healthcare staff that possesses the necessary abilities of EI would probably present services that lead to patients' satisfaction (3).

Research on EI and communication skill has been usually carried out in the field to determine the features of this ability (4-7). Despite its importance for all healthcare staff, previous studies have not investigated the relationship between communication skills and EI in all health care staff and only focused on physicians and nurses. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the EI and communication skills of healthcare staff working at teaching ambulatory clinics as affiliated university centers (8).

2. Methods

This study is a descriptive-analytical study that was done in two teaching outpatient clinics in Shiraz: Imam Reza and Motahari. 108 persons were selected using simple random sampling.

To assess the EI, Goleman's questionnaire was used. This questionnaire included four main dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and communication/relationship management. The questionnaire

Table 1. Descriptive Index of Four Dimensions of the Emotional Intelligence in Healthcare Staff

Variable Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-awareness	21.44	2.52
Self-management	18.55	3.59
Social awareness	20.36	2.90
Relationship management	20.16	3.73
Total Score of emotional intelligence	76.49	2.83

comprised 28 questions (with seven questions for each dimension) based on a five-point Likert scale. The validity and reliability of the Persian version of the questionnaire were determined by Yamani et al. (9).

To assess the communication skills, a questionnaire was designed based on the communication skills components of other questionnaires (10, 11). Its content validity was confirmed by 10 medical education experts by using the CVR method, showing a value of higher than 0.62 for all the questions. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined in a pilot study (r = 0.85).

Each question had a score ranging from one to five, showing very weak communication skills and excellent communication skills, respectively. For each healthcare staff, five patients were selected randomly to answer the questionnaires. The mean score of five patients for each healthcare staff was considered as a mean for the communication skills score.

For checking the normality of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used that was not significant and showed data had a normal distribution. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and Cronbach's alpha were used in analyzing the data using SPSS software.

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

3. Results

108 staff participated in the study. The EI questionnaire consisted of 28 questions scoring in the range of one to five. A score of less than 28 showed a completely inappropriate status, a score of 25 - 52 showed an inappropriate status, a score of 57 - 84 showed an appropriate status, and a score of over 84 showed a completely appropriate status of the EI (12). The total score of the EI was 76.49 $\pm$ 2.83 out of 112. The score of each part of the questionnaire is shown in Table 1.

The mean total score of the communication skills of the staff was estimated to be 96.80 $\pm$ 11.63 out of 120. There was a significant relationship between the total score of EI and communication skills (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.589, $P < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.74$).

There was a significant relationship between other EI dimensions and the total score of the communication skills ($P < 0.001$).

4. Discussion

EI is an important factor for patients' satisfaction. In a study on the correlation between EI of nurses and patient's satisfaction, the results showed that as the level of EI in nurses increases, the satisfaction in the patients increases, as well. Therefore, the patient satisfaction was affected by the EI level of the health care providers (13).

The mean total score of Goleman's questionnaire in the present study was equal to 76.49, indicating an appropriate level. Other studies using the same questionnaire showed lower scores (11, 14).

The mean score of the communication skills was estimated to be 96.80 $\pm$ 11.63 out of 120. Vaghee and colleagues assessed the total score of the communication skills as 87.78 by using a 27-question checklist scoring from 0 to 108, which was similar to the results of the present study (15).

The main aim of this study was to determine the relationship between EI and the communication skills of the staff. A significant, strong, and positive relationship was observed between the EI and the communication skills that was in accordance with the determined coefficient computed in this study ($R^2 = 0.74$). This showed that more than 70 percent of variances related to the EI were explained by the communication skills, i.e. individuals with a higher level of the EI have a higher score on the communication skills. The same results were reported in other studies (11, 16, 17).

4.1. Conclusion

It can be concluded that having an appropriate level of EI is necessary for ideal communication.

The limitations of this study were the small sample size and the use of questionnaires for measuring communication skills; thus, it was not possible for the researchers to observe the behavior of the staff.

Footnote

Ethical Considerations: All names remained confidential. The ethics commitee of Shirz University of Medical Sciences approved the manuscript.

References

1. Goleman D, Cherniss C. *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations*. Jossey-Bass; 2001.
2. Rajashree K. Training programs in communication skills for health care professionals and volunteers. *Indian J Palliat Care*. 2011;**17**(Suppl):S12–3. doi: 10.4103/0973-1075.76232. [PubMed: 21811359]. [PubMed Central: PMC3140080].
3. Merida-Lopez S, Extremera N. Emotional intelligence and teacher burnout: A systematic review. *Int J Educat Res*. 2017;**85**:121–30. doi: 10.1016/j.ijer.2017.07.006.
4. Trickey AW, Newcomb AB, Porrey M, Wright J, Bayless J, Piscitani F, et al. Assessment of surgery resident's interpersonal communication skills: Validation evidence for the communication assessment tool in a simulation environment. *J Surg Educ*. 2016;**73**(6):e19–27. doi: 10.1016/j.jsurg.2016.04.016. [PubMed: 27216300].
5. Zhu B, Chen CR, Shi ZY, Liang HX, Liu B. Mediating effect of self-efficacy in relationship between emotional intelligence and clinical communication competency of nurses. *Int J Nurs Sc*. 2016;**3**(2):162–8. doi: 10.1016/j.ijnss.2016.04.003.
6. Meng L, Qi J. The effect of an emotional intelligence intervention on reducing stress and improving communication skills of nursing students. *Neuro Quantol*. 2018;**16**(1).
7. Reed S, Kassis K, Nagel R, Verbeck N, Mahan JD, Shell R. Does emotional intelligence predict breaking bad news skills in pediatric interns? A pilot study. *Med Educ Online*. 2015;**20**:24245. doi: 10.3402/meo.v20.24245. [PubMed: 26286897]. [PubMed Central: PMC4541075].
8. Salehi A, Harris N, Lotfi F, Hashemi N, Kojouri J, Amini M. Reform in medical and health sciences educational system: A Delphi study of faculty member's views at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. *East Mediterr Health J*. 2014;**20**(3):151–61. [PubMed: 24950072].
9. Yamani N, Shahabi M, Haghani F. The relationship between emotional intelligence and job stress in the faculty of medicine in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. *J Adv Med Educ Prof*. 2014;**2**(1):20–6. [PubMed: 25512914]. [PubMed Central: PMC4235538].
10. Saeid Y, Javadi M, Sirati Nir M. On the relationship between emotional intelligence and demographical variables in nurses. *J Milit Med*. 2013;**15**(1):87–92.
11. Mafi L, Asefzade S. [Association of emotional intelligence and communication skills with patients in nurses]. *JQUMS*. 2014. Persian.
12. Gladson Nwokah N, Ahiauzu AI. Emotional intelligence and marketing effectiveness. *Market Intellig Plan*. 2009;**27**(7):864–81. doi: 10.1108/02634500911000199.
13. Oyur Celik G. The relationship between patient satisfaction and emotional intelligence skills of nurses working in surgical clinics. *Patient Prefer Adherence*. 2017;**11**:1363–8. doi: 10.2147/PPA.S136185. [PubMed: 28860719]. [PubMed Central: PMC5558585].
14. Suhaimi AW, Marzuki NA, Mustaffa CS. The relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication skills in disaster management context: A proposed framework. *Soc Behav Sci*. 2014;**155**:110–4. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.265.
15. Vaghee S, Yavari M. [The effect of communication skills training on the quality of nursing care of patients]. *Evid Based Care*. 2013;**2**(4):37–46. Persian.
16. Amraei M, Ashrafi-Rizi H, Papi A, Bahrami S, Samuei R. [The relationship between EI and communication skills of librarians in Isfahan University and Isfahan University of Medical Sciences]. *Health Info Manag*. 2012;**8**(5):662–7. Persian.
17. Raeissi P, Kalhor R, Azmal M. [Correlation between emotional intelligence and communication skills in managers in educational hospitals of Qazvin]. *J Qazvin Univ Med Sci*. 2010;**13**(4):57–62. Persian.