Original Article

Levels of Emotional Intelligence: A Study of Students in Kenya Medical Training College

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ABSTRACT

Nature bestowed humans with emotions. The stresses of the modern-day world have a negative effect; hence, people are becoming more emotionally volatile, less self-motivated, and less compassionate. Consequently, the levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) continue to decline. Furthermore, the daily challenge of dealing effectively with emotions is critical to human beings because our brains are hard-wired to give emotions the upper hand: Our view of the world, how we react to it and adjust our behaviour accordingly is largely influenced by emotions. Emotional Intelligence (EI) skills are huge contributors to overall health as well as success in life, which is attributed to their impact on the ability to motivate and self-manage. This study assesses the level of EI among Students in Kenya Medical Training Colleges. The sample comprised 372 participants aged between 17 and 25 years. Data were collected using a researcher developed questionnaire and an emotional intelligence assessment tool with five components/subscales. These are: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management skills, adaptability, and general mood. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The average scores for all participants were as follows: 41.9 for intrapersonal; 28.3 for interpersonal; 30.8 for stress management; 23.9 for adaptability; and 25.3 for general mood. Consequently, the overall average scores were 150.2 which falls under the high level of EI based on the criteria for measuring EI. The implication is that the students at Kenya Medical Training College have a high level of emotional intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

The stresses of the modern-day world have a negative effect; hence, people are becoming more emotionally volatile, less self-motivated, and less compassionate. Consequently, the levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) continue to decline. Further, the day-to-day challenges of effectively dealing with emotions is crucial to human beings since human brains are hard-wired to give emotions the upper hand. Our view of the world, how we react to it, and adjust our behaviour accordingly are largely influenced by emotions (Gasque, 2016).

One of the areas that psychologists have used in their research work is EI (Martins et al., 2010; Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2016). Therefore, the researcher intended to examine the level of EI among college students in Kenya. The study will aid in understanding the level of EI among medical training students, which will enable facilitators of education to properly understand the student's emotions and feelings; thus, changing and developing classroom strategies that lead to a better learning environment. Furthermore, EI, or the ability to accurately perceive, assess, and control emotions accurately may be an important individual resource for student's mental health as they grapple with college transition issues (Schutte et al., 2013; Vesely et al., 2014).

EI is the ability to recognize and express emotions adaptively towards self and others (Sunaryo et al., 2017). It has been referred to as a type of social intelligence characterized by the capacity to pay close attention to personal emotions and that of others, to differentiate between them, and apply this information to direct one's thoughts and actions (Misra & Biswal, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Health care practitioners and medical students frequently experience the death and suffering of patients while providing health care. The lack of appropriate medical equipment and treatment failures that cause their patients to suffer as well as the fear and anxiety of contracting diseases like COVID 19 can be a source of significant emotional challenge and consequently a source of mental illness especially depression and suicide. Moreover, positive emotions affect an individual's behaviours and promote cooperation, generosity, and helpfulness, thus; playing an important role in effectively adapting to the challenges of life (Schotanus et al, 2016).

The element of capturing individuals' ability to master their emotions and feelings which translate to EI is not fully explored especially in students' suicidal ideation research (Hazra & Dasgupta, 2011). This is especially so with medical students who join the medical training school as laypeople and are expected to navigate a creepy terrain during the process of building their profession throughout training. Stressful events such as attending to the dying, the dead patients, and their relatives typically elicit significant emotional responses. Thus, understanding and managing emotions during clinical experiences and in an assessment-driven climate is an important area of EI and mental wellness.

Besides, other pressures during the training may emanate from individuals' social lives and relations. Exposure to stress is generally linked to negative outcomes. Among them is more

incidence of psychological disorders like generalized anxiety disorder, reduced well-being, posttraumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, suicidal ideation, and suicide (Ruzhenkova et al, 2018). Therefore, the capacity to regulate emotions is perceived as the mediator for stress management (Finlay-Jones et al., 2015).

There are studies on the link between academic achievement and EI (Fallahzadeh, 2011; Suleman et al., 2019; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020), but there is a lack of research on the levels of the subscales of EI. While research in this area is critical, scanty research on college students on mental conditions exists. In Kenya, for instance, a study to "determine the effectiveness of psycho-education on symptom severity of depression, hopelessness, suicidality, anxiety, and risk of

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Trait Emotional Intelligence Theory, the Bar-On model of EI, and the Goleman model of EI.

Trait Emotional Intelligence Theory

The trait-approach model by Goleman uses self-report measurement tools like the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) to assess the components of EI. The original version of the EQ-i comprises 133 items, that is, short sentences, and uses a 5-point response scale that comprises a textual response format that ranges from "very seldom or not true of me" (1) to "very often true of me or true of me" (5). It is appropriate for people aged 17 years and above and it takes approximately 40 minutes to undertake the test. Bar-On (1997) argued that emotionally intelligent people are normally flexible, optimistic, effective in solving problems, realistic, and coping with stress, without losing their control.

In comparison to other approaches, trait EI theory provides various advantages (Robinson & Clone, 2002). It emphasizes the subjective aspect of emotional experiences. Second, it is not bound to any specific proprietary tests, but rather is universal and provides a platform for the analysis of data from any EI or related components questionnaire. Furthermore, rather than being limited to one idiosyncratic model, it is easily adaptable to cognate domains such as social intelligence. In addition, the Trait EI theory has

substance abuse" by Muriungi and Ndetei (2013), reported that Psycho-education was effective in minimizing the severity of symptoms of depression. However, the study did not investigate areas touching on EI and how it relates to suicidal behaviours. Even with many suicide cases being reported in Kenya and especially among university and college-going youth, there are no studies that focus on medical students and EI hence a gap in the literature. Specifically, this study aimed to bridge the gap by examining the levels of EI for purposes of knowledge and intervention.

Objective of the Study

This study assesses the level of EI among Students in Kenya Medical Training Colleges

widespread empirical backing and findings that have been reliably replicated in multiple investigations that are theoretically driven, methodologically advanced, and conducted independently (Robinson & Clone 2002). In the contrast, critics claim that it is impossible to get competent assessments regarding a typically developed individual's intrapersonal emotional capacities when that person is the only one with immediate access to the information required to make such a judgment. Moreover, while a person can perform well on assessments of a particular feature, he may not necessarily behave in that manner in every setting. A trait is a consistent feature that makes people behave in a certain way. According to the characteristic hypothesis, individual personalities are made up of these basic inclinations (Fajkowska & Kreitler, 2018).

In this study, the Big Five Trait theory, one among the famous trait theory will be the most preferred. The approach considers the impact of emotional expressions and interpersonal relationships. Each unique trait is appraised individually and its impact on interpersonal relationships and mental wellness are evaluated. Eysenck and Eysenck (2013) found that Neuroticism (emotional instability) is a trait in the Big five trait model, which is an individual's tendency to have negative emotions like depression, anxiety, or anger is a major factor of "personality pathology". The people who are high in this trait tend to be more stressed, are upset easily, worry about numerous issues, feel anxious, get shifts in their moods, and struggle to regain normalcy after a stressful experience. Hence, the Big Five theory considers

the ways emotions influence an individual's relations, mental health, and suicidality. Thus, the current study concerns itself with traits that affect emotions.

Bar-On Model of Emotional Intelligence

Bar-On's (2006) model as a trait model of EI assesses the EI using five components, namely: Stress management, intrapersonal skills, adaptability, general mood, and interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills comprise the relationship management whereas intrapersonal skills focus on personal concentration and contribution and the capacity to organize and conduct independent initiatives. Stress management skills entail the ability to remain cool, use good coping mechanisms, and create stronger support systems. Adaptability skills comprise strong skills for solving problems, flexibility, and the capacity to reframe problems as well as solutions. Lastly, General Mood is an indicator of resilience and optimism.

To assess the Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence, the Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0 (EQ-i 2.0) and the EQ-360 were created. The EQ-i 2.0 is a self-report tool meant to assess numerous EI characteristics. Furthermore, the EQ 360 assessment gives a more in-depth study by requesting information from people who deal with the person being rated. When the observer's scores are compared to EQ-i 2.0 self-report scores, a more complete profile emerges. Both measurements use a single total score, five composite scores, and 15 specific subscales to assess EI. The results at the item level are also shown. The Bar-On Model of EI in respect to the five elements including General Mood, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Stress Management and Adaptability.

The applicability of this theory in the study was that it has interrelated emotional and social competences which determine how the medical students understand themselves, how they relate with others and how they cope with daily demands and challenges.

Goleman's model of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman's (1995) model is a competence model of EI. Goleman brought to light the term EI in his book in which he noted that EI entails five essential elements which are: motivating oneself, being aware of personal emotions, managing emotions, handling relationships, and recognizing other's emotions. Later, Goleman (2001) refined this model and developed a four dimensions competency model. Each of these four dimensions serves as the foundation for the development of other learned abilities or competencies required in the organizational sphere. According to Boyatzis et al., (2000) four dimensions are further grouped into 20 competencies which are: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship management.

Empirical Review

The level of Emotional Intelligence among College and University Students

Kant (2019) investigated EI among Indian university students. The research sought to explore the level of EI of university students, establish the differences between EI based on gender, level of course, and schools of study as well as the locality. The results established that all university students had a high level of EI. The results further showed that all students in the school of education had a high level of EI than those students in the school of law and governance.

Advancing the same idea of EI, Almajali et al. (2016) evaluated the level of EI among University of Jordan students and its relationship to Social and Psychological adjustment. Their findings revealed a moderate level of EI and a positive link between EI and social-psychological adjustment. Components of EI explained 82% of the overall variance in social-psychological adjustment.

Majerníková and Obročníková (2017) studied the level of EI among nursing undergraduate students in Slovakia. The study aimed to examine the levels of global EI of undergraduate students in a nursing school and explore the influence of the factors such as type of completed high school education, and years of study on EI. The findings revealed a higher level of EI among the nursing students in all areas of EI except self-control when compared to a population norm.

Another study was done in the State of Oman, at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) by Sulaiman (2013). It examined the correlation between depression, EI, and psychological adjustment among university students. The researcher sampled 323 students, out of whom 164 were male participants and the rest 159 were female

participants. The participants were randomly selected by approaching them in person or by inviting them to public lectures at the student's counselling centre. The researcher employed various research instruments or tools. The first research tool was an emotional intelligence scale (Arabic version), which assessed the participant's EI in two dimensions, including emotional self–management and social skills. The second tool was the Psychological Adjustment Instrument which was used to assess the participant's psychological, personal adjustment, family adjustment, academic adjustment, and social adjustment. The third tool was the Beck Depression Inventory which was used to assess the participant's type and level of depression.

A T-test was used in data analysis to discover differences between females and males in EI means (high, low) on the means of adjustment and depression. The result of the test established a high level of EI among the SQU students. On average, the EI for female students was higher than males. There was a negative relationship between EI and depressive symptoms and a positive relationship between psychological adjustment and EI. This study was conducted in Oman while the current study was carried out in Kenya.

Khurshid et al. (2018) explored "the impact of prevailing activities on the development of EI among university students". In this study, the author measured the EI of the university students and compared their EI having the different times of exposure to the curricular activities in their university. The researcher adopted a cross-sectional and descriptive research design which entailed casual comparative research methods. Data were collected from students at different semesters, that is, at the entry, mid-semester, and final semester. Data was collected from a sample of 1,775 participants using a multistage stratified random sampling technique. The data collection instrument adopted in this study was a self-report assessment of EI which was based on Goleman's model of EI.

The findings revealed that 23 percent of the students had a low level of emotional intelligence, 50 percent had a moderate level of EI, and 27 percent. However, concerning the level of emotional intelligence and factor-wise, the study established that university students had a significantly high level of emotional self-awareness; emotional self-regulation; interpersonal skills as well as EI as a whole. This revealed that the university students had a high level of EI. Although this study measured the level of EI among students, the main agenda was to establish if the curriculum activities' affects the level of EI. It was thus, done at three different stages. The current study, on the other hand, assessed EI for students who have been exposed to curriculum activities for some time. Besides, this study was conducted among university students in partisan while the current study was done among college students in KMTC in Kenya. Therefore, the current study differed from this study.

Özlü et al., (2016) conducted a study where they compared the EI. Levels of students from different fields of studies. The researchers employed a descriptive and cross-section research design. The study was conducted among a sample of 305 senior students of Atat¨urk University in Turkey. The students were pursuing three different fields of study, namely: health, social, and nature. Random sampling methods were employed in selecting a representative sample for the study. The participants were selected from three faculties in each field of study. The collection of data was collected using a researcher-developed personal information form that helped to collect the social demographic characteristics of the participants. Besides, the researcher adopted the Emotional Intelligence Evaluation scale to assess the level of EI of the participants. The findings revealed that the students from the natural science department had low levels of emotional intelligence while the students from the health and social science had a moderate level of EI. This study differs from the current study in various ways. First, the study was carried out in a university in Turkey while the current research was done among college students in Kenya. Second, the focus of this research was to compare the EI levels among students pursuing natural science, social, and health sciences. However, the current study focused on assessing the level of EI among college students.

Burgess-Wilkerson et al. (2013) conducted a comparative study of two universities where they explored the EI of students among the two colleges of business administration programs. The research was carried out among undergraduates and graduate students from Rockport University and Whitmore University in the USA. Data was collected among 100 students from both

universities. The researchers calculated the mean for each emotional intelligence score for the participants from the two universities. The analysis of data was done using a two-sample t-test with an assumption of equal variances. Besides, a one-tailed test was conducted since the hypotheses predicted the direction. The results established that the emotional intelligence of the students from both Universities was high and similar. It was established a lack of significant difference between the students' EI from the two universities. Therefore, the researchers concluded that although there was a slight difference between the universities, the EI abilities of the student population were remarkably similar. This study differed from the current study in two ways. First, the study was a comparative one where the EI of students from two Universities were compared. Second, the study was conducted in the USA while the current study was carried out in a medical college in Kenya.

Shrestha and Mandal (2021) conducted a study about EI among nursing students in eastern Nepal. The research objective was to examine the levels of EI among nursing students. The researcher employed a cross-sectional analytical research design to assess the EI among the nursing students in the Biratnagar Nursing campus. The research was done among 132 participants and a structured questionnaire was employed in the collection of data that was self-administered to the first, second and third-years' students. The questionnaire had two parts. The first part comprises of social demographic factors of participants while the second part comprised the "Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test" that was used to assess the level of EI of the participants. The findings revealed that 81.8% of the participants had a high level of EI while the rest 18.2% had a moderate level of EI. Overall, the researchers established that the nursing students had a high level of EI. This research differs from the current study in that it was carried out in Nepal while the current study was conducted among medical students in Kenya.

Sinan et al. (2017) investigated "the level of emotional intelligence among students at Aksaray University and Kırıkkale University in Turkey".

FINDINGS

Descriptive Cumulative (Overall) statistics for Emotional Intelligence

The research was carried out among 369 students who were attending coaching and teaching departments at Aksaray University and Kırıkkale University Sports Sciences Faculty. The researcher collected data using a questionnaire that consisted of two parts. The first part personal information form helped to collect the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part comprised "The Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale" which was used to assess the level of EI. Data analysis was done using SPSS 23.0. The findings revealed that the students from the coaching department had a high level of EI than the students from the teaching department. This study differed from the current study in that it was conducted in turkey while the current study was conducted in Kenya. Besides, this study compared the level of EI among students from two universities while the current study was conducted among college students from one college KMTC; hence, was not comparative.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was a quantitative and qualitative approach/mixed-method approach. The correlational research design was applied in assessing the association between EI and Suicidality. On the other hand, the descriptive research design was employed in describing the situation among the population of the study. This helped to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. The targeted population was 5,215 diploma students in KMTC Nairobi and Mathare campuses, aged between 17 and 25 years. The sample size of the study was 372 participants. Before data collection commenced, the necessary approvals and permits were acquired. This included seeking approval from KMTC and acquiring a research permit from the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI).

A researcher-designed socio-demographic questionnaire, an Emotional Intelligence assessment tool, and a focus group discussion guide were employed in collecting data. The SPSS version 20 for windows was used in data analysis by applying descriptive and inferential statistics.

The researcher sought to examine the level of EI based on the student's intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, general mood, adaptability,

and stress management. The findings are presented below in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Level of Emotional Intelligence

Dimensions	Average Scores	Lowest score	Highest	Level of EI (Interpretation)
Intrapersonal	41.9	11	55	High
Interpersonal	28.3	7	35	High
Stress Management	30.8	8	40	High
Adaptability	23.9	6	30	High
General Mood	25.3	6	30	High
TOTAL	150.2	38	190	High

Source: (Survey data, 2021)

The findings established that the students had a high level of intelligence in the entire dimension (intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, general mood, adaptability, and stress management). The results show that the EI of the participants was high scoring 150.2 out of the total scores of 190, which falls under the high level of EI based on the criteria for measuring Emotional Intelligence

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings on subscales of EI (intrapersonal & interpersonal skills) are in line with previous empirical studies which showed that college students have a high level of communication skills. However, findings on stress management subscale of the current study contradict a recent study by Hailu et al. (2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that college students have a high level of EI concerning intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and general mood. Therefore, college students should enhance their interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills, stress management ability, be flexible in dealing with the inevitable daily challenges, and have a positive general mood to help them remain optimistic about life. This will be fundamental in coping with the life stressors encountered by college students which include and not limited to financial stressors, academic demands, test anxiety, and relationships both family and romantic. Further, other stressors that are related to the changes in lifestyle and new responsibilities should be identified and strategies to resolve them established.

It was suggested that the management of KMTC should strive to reduce the vulnerability to stress and depression among the students. To achieve this, the management should establish a module that every medical student should go through during their first years of study to impart important social skills including intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, stress coping skills, adaptability, and general mood. This will go a long way in enhancing levels of emotional intelligence during their study, hence, preventing them from engaging in suicidality. This will in turn enhance social skills that will help them cope with daily life challenges. Since EI has a considerable impact on the general wellness of the students, a review of the student's curriculum to facilitate the learning of these skills and apply them in their day-to-day lives is highly recommended.

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