Increasing Emotional Intelligence in Online RN-BSN Students: Is It Possible?

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is an essential component to nursing practice and research suggests it can be increased through targeted teaching strategies (Cherry, Fletcher & O'Sullivan, 2013; Freshwater & Stickley, 2004), yet no research has been done within the setting of online RN-BSN education. The purpose of this non-experimental pretest posttest pilot study utilizing retrospective data was to examine the impact EI education has on the EI levels of online RN-BSN students enrolled in a nursing program in the Midwest. The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form (TEIQue-SF) was used as the pretest and posttest tool. The pretest was completed during an orientation course to the online RN-BSN program and the posttest was completed at the end of the first nursing course. The educational strategies in the first nursing course included a unit on EI, reflective discussions and journaling, and a service project with reflective writing. Data analysis of a consecutive sample ($N = 14$) demonstrated the difference between the means of the pretest and posttest scores were not statistically significant with a $p \leq .05$. Although the mean scores were not statistically significant ($p = .218$ two-tailed), the majority of the students increased their EI scores between the pretest and posttest. Recommendations for future research and implications for nursing practice and education are discussed.

About the Author

Karie Stamer brings extensive teaching experience to Northwestern's nursing faculty, including a strong background in the development and delivery of online courses. She previously taught at Northwest Iowa Community College for seven years. Stamer also worked for the Orange City Area Health System for 11 years as a nurse manager and floor nurse. She has worked in medical/surgical nursing, ER, obstetrics and mental health.

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Capstone Project for Doctorate of Nursing Practice Program at American Sentinel University
Capstone Chair: Kelli Greder, Ph.D., R.N.
Committee Member: Rebecca Hoey, Ed.D.

Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is an essential component to nursing practice, and research suggests it can be increased through targeted teaching strategies (Cherry, Fletcher, O'Sullivan, & Dornan, 2013; Freshwater & Stickley, 2004), yet no research has been done within the setting of online RN-BSN education. The purpose of this non-experimental pretest-posttest pilot study utilizing retrospective data was to examine the impact EI education has on the EI levels of online RN-BSN students enrolled in a nursing program in the Midwest. The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire - Short Form (TEIQue-SF) was used as the pretest and posttest tool. The pretest was completed during an orientation course to the online RN-BSN program and the posttest was completed at the end of the first nursing course. The educational strategies in the first nursing course included a unit on EI, reflective discussions and journaling, and a service project with reflective writing. Data analysis of a consecutive sample ($N = 14$) demonstrated the difference between the means of the pretest and posttest scores was not statistically significant with a $p \leq .05$. Although the mean scores were not statistically significant ($p = .218$ two-tailed), the majority of the students increased their EI scores between the pretest and posttest. Recommendations for future research and implications for nursing practice and education are discussed.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, nursing education, RN-BSN, online learning

Introduction & Problem Statement

❖ Increased need for BSN prepared nurses (IOM, 2011).
❖ Online environments lack personal connections. (Reilly, Gallagher-Lepak, & Killion, 2012).
❖ Education lacks inclusion of affective & cognitive learning (Gallagher-Lepak, Reilly, & Killion, 2009).
❖ Emotional intelligence (EI) increases personal connection (Gallagher-Lepak, Reilly, & Killion, 2009).
❖ EI increased through education (Cherry, Fletcher, O'Sullivan, & Dornan, 2013; Freshwater & Stickley, 2004).
❖ No research on online RN-BSN students and EI.

This project was a non-experimental pretest-posttest pilot study utilizing retrospective data to examine the impact emotional intelligence education had on the EI levels of online RN-BSN students enrolled in a nursing program in the Midwest.
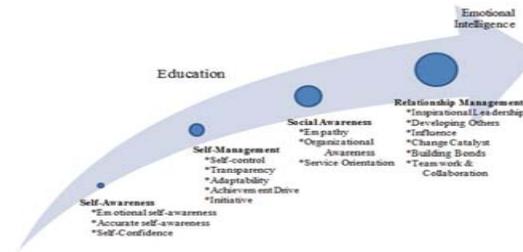

Figure A. Increasing Emotional Intelligence in RN-BSN Students. This conceptual framework demonstrates the effects of education about EI on levels of EI in online RN-BSN students.

Project Design & Methodology

Research Question: Does emotional intelligence education impact the EI levels of online RN-BSN students enrolled in a nursing program in Iowa?

Project Design: Non-experimental, comparative design: pretest-posttest retrospective data.

Methodology: Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) administered twice: Orientation Course & at end of NUR 310.

EI content and teaching strategies integrated into NUR 310:
    Teaching Strategies: self-inquiry with reflective discussion and writing within the weekly discussions on weeks one, three and five; reflective journaling on weeks two, four and six; and a two-hour service project with reflective writing that can be done at the student's convenience any time between weeks one through six of the eight-week course.

Descriptive statistics: demographic data of the sample.

Item level analysis: each question of the 30 questions on the TEIQue-SF to determine the mean and standard deviation.

Paired-samples t-test: identify changes in the mean total score attained from the pretest-posttest TEIQue-SF. The difference in scores was used to determine the effectiveness of the implemented teaching strategies. For this study, statistical significance was defined as a p value of less than or equal to .05.

Results

n= 14 student
Shapiro-Wilks test, Normal Q-Q Plot
Paired-samples t-test, mean scores of pretest/posttest
p = .218 (two-tailed)

Table 2
Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	DV_Pre	165.36	14	16.051	4.290
	DV_Post	170.07	14	17.389	4.647

Table 2 Paired Samples Statistic

Table 3
Results of t-test Comparing Mean of Pretest and Posttest Scores

	Paired Differences							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CI of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest Mean Score - Posttest Mean Score	-4.72	13.62	3.64	-12.58	3.15	-1.29	13	.218

p< .03

Table 3 Results of Paired Samples t-test

Conclusion & Significance to Nursing

❖ Pilot study: sample size small, time frame short.
❖ Cannot reject null hypothesis.
❖ 9 of 14 improved score, not statistically significant.
❖ Lowest pretest score lower than lowest posttest score.
❖ Reflection assignment indicated students felt an increased EI even if not demonstrated in TEIQue-SF score.

Nursing

❖ Online RN-BSN programs essential (IOM, 2011; NCSBN, 2013).
❖ Online community (Perfetto, 2015) = ↑ satisfaction & retention (Rankin, 2013).
❖ Targeted interventions ↑ EI (Cherry, Fletcher, O'Sullivan, & Dornan, 2013; Gallegher-Lepak, Reilly, & Killion, 2009).
❖ ↑ EI levels important to profession:
    - enhances health, reduces stress (Ball, 2013).
    - ↓ nurse burnout.
    - development of therapeutic relationships (Kaur, Sambasivan, & Kumar, 2013).
    - improves relations with employees, increased morale and optimism among workers as well as decreased perceived stress levels, and increased job performance and productivity (Morrison, 2008).
❖ EI has proven fundamental to nursing practice (Akerjordet & Severinsson, 2009; Bellack, 1999).

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