

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Stress Coping, and Adjustment to College Life in Nursing Students

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Abstract. This study was done to identify the relationship between emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life in nursing students. Subjects were 227 associate nursing students (1st and 2nd grade) in Korea. The data were collected using self-report questionnaire from september 16 to 22, 2015. Data were analyzed by frequencies, independent t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation coefficients, multiple regression using SPSS Win 23.0. Significant correlations were found between emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life in nursing students. These findings indicate that there is a need to improve emotional intelligence and stress coping to encourage adjustment to college life in nursing students. Therefore, it is necessary to develop and test the program for improving emotional intelligence of nursing students.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Stress coping, Adjustment to college life, Nursing students

1 Introduction

Unlike general college students, nursing students should learn practical qualifications through regular clinical training in unfamiliar environments like hospital besides their lesson, and experience various personal relations and many difficulties while they are students whose knowledge and technique are insufficient, so are under stress [1]. However, because of relatively high employment rate in comparison with a serious employment crisis, many students apply to a nursing department without careful consideration, so do not cope with stress because of not only adjustment to college life and achievement of developmental task but also a disagreement of aptitude, and have their fill of trouble during college life [2], so do not adjust to college life, and this can lead to leave of absence or dropping out of school. Most nursing students experience much stress and emotional labor as a job facing various objects in a clinical site after graduation, and this can lead to job stress, exhaustion, and changing jobs in early stages, so the ability to control emotional labor is needed.

To adjust to college life, it is important to have an interest in school activities and be immersed in these activities, and emotional intelligence of students

participating in extracurricular activities is higher than emotional intelligence of students who do not participate in extracurricular activities [2]. Students with high emotional intelligence show effective ways of coping such as positive evaluation of a stress situation and trying to solve a problem actively [3],[4].

Therefore, it is important to establish the effect on stress coping of nursing students' emotional intelligence, and it is also meaningful to examine the effect on adjustment to college life of emotional intelligence and stress coping. Therefore, this study desires to suggest base line data to develop program of adjustment to college life and intervention program for improvement of emotional intelligence and stress coping of nursing students in the future, by understanding emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life of nursing students, and establishing the relationship between them.

2 Methods

2.1 Study population

This study targeted 227 nursing students (1st and 2nd grade) in Korea. Data were collected using structured questionnaires from September 16 2015 to September 22 2015.

2.2 Measurements

2.2.1 Emotional intelligence

The study used a tool that Wong and Law [5] Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) was adapted by Jung [6]. WLEIS is total 16 questions consisting of 7-point Likert Scale. On development of Wong and Law [5]'s tool, Cronbach's α is that 'understanding self-emotion' is .86, 'understanding other's emotion' is .82, 'emotional use' is .85, and 'emotional control' is .79. The whole Cronbach's α of this study is .89, and sub-domains are that 'understanding self-emotion' is .85, 'understanding other's emotion' is .81, 'emotional use' is .85, and 'emotional control' is .86.

2.2.2 Stress coping

The study used a tool going through validity verification targeting Korean students that Shin and Kim [7] adapted Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI) developed by Amirkhan [8] into Korean Coping Strategy Indicator (K-CSI). This is total 33 questions of self-report questionnaire, so 3 sub-domains are social support approach, problem-solution coping, and evasion-oriented coping, so consist of 3-point Likert Scale. In a study of Shin and Kim [7], the whole Cronbach's α is .84. The whole

Cronbach's α of this study is .79.

2.2.3 Adjustment to college life

College adjustment scale developed by Jung and Park [9] was used. This tool has total 19 questions consisting of 5 sub-domains. This consists of 5-point Likert Scale. On development of Jung and Park [9]'s tool, the whole Cronbach's α is .86. The whole Cronbach's α of this study is .86.

2.3 Analysis

Collected data was analyzed by using SPSS 23.0 Program. General characteristics of objects were analyzed by frequency, percentage, average, and standard deviation. Correlation between variables was analyzed by Pearson's correlation coefficient and reliability was shown with Cronbach's α .

2.4 Ethical consideration

This study received the approval of the IRB (institutional review board) affiliated with the Kangwon university (KWNUIRB-2015-05-004-004).

3 Results

3.1 Emotional Intelligence, Stress Coping, and Adjustment to College Life of Nursing Students

Grand mean emotional intelligence of nursing students is 4.82 (± 0.73), and 'understanding self-emotion' of sub-domains is 5.23 (± 0.88), so is the highest domain, and other sub-domains are in the order of 'understanding other's emotion' 5.21 (± 0.88), 'emotional use' 4.52 (± 1.01), and 'emotional control' 4.33 (± 1.13). Grand mean stress coping is 2.11 (± 0.22), and 'social support approach' of sub-domains is 2.26 (± 0.37), so is the highest sub-domain, and other sub-domains are in the order of 'problem-solution coping' 2.18 (± 0.32) and 'evasion-oriented coping' 1.88 (± 0.33). Grand mean adjustment to college life is 3.27 (± 0.48), and 'school activities' of sub-domains is 3.84 (± 0.57), so is the highest sub-domain, and other sub-domains are in the order of 'individual psychology' 3.56 (± 0.65) and 'personal relations' 3.06 (± 0.96) [Table 1].

3. 2 The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Stress Coping, Adjustment to College Life

As a result of an analysis through Pearson's correlations to confirm the effect on adjustment to college life of emotional intelligence and stress coping of nursing students, correlations of emotional intelligence and stress coping ($r=.294, p<.001$) of nursing students, emotional intelligence and adjustment to college life ($r=.534, p<.001$), and stress coping and adjustment to college life ($r=.301, p<.001$) show a meaningful positive correlation [Table 2].

Table 1. Emotional intelligence, stress coping, adjustment to college life in nursing students (N=227)

Variables	Mean±SD
Emotional intelligence	4.82±0.73
Self emotional appraisal	5.23±0.88
Others emotional appraisal	5.21±0.88
Use of emotion	4.52±1.01
Regulation of Emotion.	4.33±1.13
Stress coping	2.11±0.22
social support seeking	2.26±0.37
avoidance	1.88±0.33
problem solving	2.18±0.32
Adjustment to college life	3.27±0.48
Academic activity	3.84±0.57
Career ready	2.88±0.70
Individual psychology	3.56±0.65
Interpersonal relationship	3.06±0.69
Social experience	2.94±0.77

Table 2. Correlations of emotional intelligence, stress coping and adjustment to college life (N=227)

Variables	Emotional intelligence	Stress coping
	<i>r(p)</i>	
Stress coping	.294 (<.001)**	
Adjustment to college life	.534 (<.001)**	.301 (<.001)**

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

4 Discussion

This study desires to suggest base line data to develop program of adjustment to college life and intervention program for improvement of emotional intelligence and stress coping of nursing students in the future, by understanding emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life of nursing students, and establishing the relationship between them.

In this study, grand mean emotional intelligence of nursing students is 4.82 out of 7, so is more than the middle. Understanding self-emotion is the highest sub-domain, and sub-domains are in the order of understanding other's emotion, emotional use, and emotional control. This is similar to the result reporting grand mean emotional intelligence is 4.76 in the study of [10], and ranking by domains conforms. This is because objects of the study are first and second-year nursing students, so it is insufficient for them to control, organize, and use their own emotion yet. Therefore, the study suggests the use of emotional intervention program for nursing students to use and control their own emotion efficiently.

About stress coping of nursing students, social support approach is the highest sub-domain, and sub-domains are in the order of problem-solution coping and evasion-oriented coping. Shin and Kim [7] developed Stress Coping Strategy Test targeting college students. In case of female students, ranking by sub-domains conforms to this study, but in case of male students, problem-solution coping is the highest sub-domain, and sub-domains of male students are in the order of social support approach and evasion-oriented coping. Most nursing students of this study are female students, so the results reflect characteristics of female students focusing on social support in comparison with male students focusing on problem-solution about stress coping. Therefore, actual coping should be reached by establishing individual stress coping and using coping suited to it actively.

About adjustment to college life, school activities are the highest sub-domain, and sub-domains are in the order of individual psychology and personal relations. Jung and Park [9] developed adjustment scale to college life suited to college reality of this country targeting general students. Individual psychology is the highest sub-domain, and sub-domains are in the order of school activities and personal relations. In case of nursing students, there is great pressure of study from the lower grades due to the characteristics of the department, so school activities may be the highest sub-domain. Therefore, to improve academic ability, learning method considering levels and

capabilities by individual students or groups should be offered by using various teaching and learning methods, and various program to improve academic ability such as mentor-mentee program and group activity between professor and student should be found. In addition, Kim and Jang [11] reported that the higher psychological stability and use of coping, the higher adjustment to college life. A method to improve these individual inner factors should be considered together.

About a correlation between emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life of nursing students in this study, first, there is a meaningful positive correlation ($r=.294$, $p<.001$) between emotional intelligence and stress coping. Song and Chae [2] reported that the higher emotional intelligence is, the more problem-solution coping of stress coping is used ($r=.46$, $p<.001$). Emotional intelligence were significantly correlation with stress of clinical practice in nursing students. And the higher emotional intelligence was showed the lower stress of clinical practice [12] and clinical practice stress positively correlated with personal distress on empathy [13]. This means emotional intelligence is associated with stress coping, and is the result reflecting that there is the bigger effect on developing and applying emotional intelligence and stress coping together to raise emotional intelligence of nursing students.

Next, there is a meaningful positive correlation ($r=.534$, $p<.001$) between emotional intelligence and adjustment to college life. The results indicated that emotional intelligence significantly influenced on the adjustment to college life [14]. About the relationship between emotional intelligence and adjustment to college life, Park, Kim, and Cha [15] supported the result of this study by showing a positive correlation ($r=.15$, $p=.058$) between emotional awareness and adjustment to college life of nursing students. On the one hand, interpersonal relationship strong positively correlated with emotional intelligence ($r=.600$, $p<.001$) in nurses [16]. For adjustment to college life of nursing students, it is confirmed that an integral part is emotional intelligence that is the ability to evaluate and control own and other's emotion effectively.

In addition, there is a meaningful positive correlation ($r=.301$, $p<.001$) between stress coping and adjustment to college life. A study of Kim [17] targeting nursing students shows that there is a positive correlation ($r=.131$, $p=.016$) between stress coping and adjustment to college life, so is in the same context with this study. Therefore, as a method to raise adjustment to college life of nursing students, individual differentiated stress coping should be developed and applied.

Based on the results of this study, it is necessary to a program that develops and uses emotional intelligence, an inner element to improve adjustment to college life of nursing students, and nursing students should develop and apply stress coping suited to themselves.

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