Review Article

A Concept Analysis of Emotional Intelligence in Nursing

Nicole A. Webb

College of Health, Science, and Technology, University of Central Missouri, Missouri, USA

Abstract - *This concept analysis aims to discuss the significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in nursing due to its strenuous psychosocial demands. Following a review of the literature, Walker and Avant's eight-step concept analysis was used as the framework to guide the study. Results of the analysis revealed that emotional intelligence is the ability of an individual to recognize the state of their emotions and apply it to their everyday life situations. Defining attributes include the cognition of personal emotions, the ability to manage emotions, motivation, and interpersonal skills. Nurses who demonstrate the principles of EI are armed with tools to facilitate their success in the role.*

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) was originally defined as "a self-awareness of emotions (Goleman, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). It also encompasses one's ability to accept and manage emotional exchanges with others, thereby affecting the outcome of psychosocial encounters (Goleman, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). There is a place for EI in both personal and professional settings. The nursing profession presents many opportunities where these interpersonal skills can be utilized.

Nursing is a very demanding profession known for its academic rigor (Karsten et al., 2014; Newton et al., 2007). Nurses receive training that focuses heavily on technical skills; however, most nurses do not receive formal training regarding the social aspects of nursing despite its known stressful nature (Mills et al., 2017; Wallace et al., 2015). Emotional intelligence was defined by Mayer & Salovey (1997) as a set of qualities that are dependent upon each other. Mayer et al. (2008) continued research on their original definition and further stated that certain individuals possess the inherent ability to master control of their emotions, thereby creating a basis for their interactions and behaviour with others.

Daniel Goleman (1998) invented the four domains of "emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills." Many academic disciplines, nursing, and health-related fields can apply these principles to everyday practice.

Studies support the belief that EI is an essential skill for nurses and should be incorporated into training programs (Khademi et al., 2021). Khademi et al. concluded in their study that EI has a direct positive outcome on "the quality of nursing care for both nurses and patients."

Individuals seeking a career in the nursing profession will enter with varying levels of emotional intelligence. Novice nurses often enter the profession soon after graduation, thereby limiting sufficient time for role transition (Gaycol, 2022). This concept analysis seeks to emphasize the importance of EI in nursing. The application of EI during training and at any time in one's career could be quite impactful to their overall success as a nursing professional.

2. Methods

2.1. Concept Analysis Framework

Walker and Avant's (2019) framework for concept analysis was utilized for this study. The eight stages of the framework were followed to examine the concept.

2.2. Data Collection

An online search was performed using the search term "emotional intelligence in nursing." During this phase, Walker and Avant's framework guides the researcher to examine and explore the application and uses of the chosen concept. It also allows the researcher to identify common trends, which are termed "defining attributes (Walker and Avant, 2019)." The identification of relevant articles for this concept analysis was achieved following an in-depth examination of their content for suitability.

Table 1. Walker and Avant's Concept Analysis Steps

Steps for Concepts Analysis
1. Select a Concept
2. Determine the purpose of the analysis
3. Identify all uses of the concept
4. Determine the defining attributes
5. Construct a model case
6. Construct borderline, related, and contrary cases
7. Identify antecedents and consequences
8. Define empirical referents

2.3 Review of Literature

An electronic search was conducted using the term "emotional intelligence in nursing." See Tables 2 – 6.

Table 2. Review of Literature: Uses of the Concept

Study	Relevance to EI
Lina et al. [5]	Observational study of nursing students which indicated a positive correlation between positive EI and higher levels of empathy and humanistic scores.
Gaycol & Lookingbill [8]	Investigated the short length of role transition for novice nurses into the profession
Honkavuo [29]	Literature review exploring how to incorporate EI into didactic courses
Jimenez-Rodriguez et al. [30]	Effect of a psychology-related course on EI in undergraduate nursing students
Al-Hamdan et al. [31]	Collaboration among nurses, when coupled with EI, demonstrated "improved job satisfaction, better nurse retention, improved quality of patient care, and enhanced healthcare efficiency and productivity."
Mazzella-Ebstein et al. [32]	The amount of nursing experience may positively affect nurses' coping mechanisms
Cordier [33]	Recommended incorporating EI as part of the admission process for nursing programs
Batmaz et al. [34]	Recommended the incorporation of the principles of resilience and self-esteem into the nursing curriculum
Phillips et al. [35]	Demonstrated that EI is an essential skill for nurse leaders
Butler [39]	Lit. review-EI/nurse leadership

Table 3. Review of Literature: Defining Attributes

Study	Relevance to EI
Khademi et al. [7]	The study supports the belief that EI should be incorporated into nursing education programs.
Jimenez-Picon [15]	The study demonstrated a positive correlation between mindfulness and EI
Basogul & Ozgur [16]	Demonstrated how EI was utilized to manage conflict in the workplace in nursing units
Prezerakos [17]	The role of EI in nursing leadership practices; demonstrated successful workplace relationships and

	improved work environment
Kopera et al. [19]	Study of pain perception and its relationship to EI
Mayer & Salovey [1],[2]	Definition of EI
Goleman [4]	Invented four domains of EI
Teskereci et al. [37]	The study demonstrated that a course in Caring effectively fostered the development of compassion

Table 4. Review of Literature: Antecedents

Study	Relevance to EI
Cleary [13]	Emphasized the concept of mastering resilience to achieve EI
Beauvais [14]	Demonstrated a positive correlation between the factors of "empowerment, resilience, and spiritual well-being
Perreault et al. [20]	Role of self-determination in the development of EI
Barbuto & Story [21]	Established that "internal locus of control and thin mental boundaries" are prerequisites for the development of EI
Bacon & Carr [38]	Results: High EI indicates motivation and fewer negative emotions

Table 5. Review of Literature: Consequences

Study	Relevance to EI
Alsufyani et al. [6]	The study investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on coping with the daily demands of the nursing role; concluded that EI is an effective tool
MacCann et al. [22]	EI link to the achievement of academic success, the establishment of meaningful social relationships, the development of personal emotions and the management of them
Soto-Rubio et al. [23]	EI linked to increased job satisfaction, increased retention rates, lower levels of burnout, and well-being in the workplace

Table 6. Review of Literature: Empirical Referents

Study	Relevance to EI
Salovey et al. [41]	TMMS scale for the measurement of EI (empirical referents)
James et al. [25]	Tools of measurement for EI (empirical referents)
Bar-On [26], [27]	Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) for the measurement of EI (empirical referents)
Salovey et al. [28]	MSCEIT V2.0 scale for the measurement of EI (empirical referents)

3. Results

3.1. Uses of the Concept

Several research studies have explored the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) in nurses and nursing education. It has been applied to several situations involving patient care and the nurse's role. Lina et al. (2022) conducted an observational study with nursing students to determine if EI's presence affects two important nursing principles, "empathy and humanistic care." Results of the study (Lina et al., 2022) indicated a direct correlation between positive EI and higher scores on both empathy and humanistic scales. Patients benefit by receiving care from nurses who display compassion in their time of need.

Alsufyani et al. (2021) investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on coping with the stress of the demands of the nurse role. Results supported EI as an integral component in achieving and maintaining expected levels of job performance (Alsufyani et al., 2021). It was further hypothesized that EI was an effective tool for coping with the demands of the nursing profession (Alsufyani et al., 2021).

Bacon and Corr, 2017 investigated EI in undergraduate students and found that individuals possessing higher levels of EI were quite motivated to achieve their goals and exhibited fewer negative emotions. This reinforces the idea that EI is a positive trait that can be helpful in a variety of circumstances.

3.2. Defining Attributes

Walker and Avant (2019) state that defining attributes consists of specific elements and characteristics that set them apart from other concepts. A review of the literature revealed repeating themes for emotional intelligence. The defining attributes are cognition of personal emotions, the ability to manage emotions, motivation, and interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1998).

3.2.1. Cognition of Personal Emotions

An individual must be aware of their own personal emotions to master the concept of EI. For example, in a study conducted by Jimenez-Picon et al. (2021), there was a positive link between "mindfulness and emotional intelligence." Mindfulness is the basic ability to fully recognize one's emotional state and manage the reaction or response without becoming overwhelmed (Bishop, 2004).

3.2.2. Ability to Manage Emotions

Another essential component of EI is the ability to manage one's emotions, as evidenced by the Basogul et al. (2016) study. Basogul et al. examined how nurses on a particular unit dealt with conflict in the workplace and concluded that EI gave them the ability to work through situations and improve psychosocial relationships effectively.

3.2.3. Motivation

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary (2022), "motivation involves a motivating force, stimulus, or influence. Kopera et al. (2017) conducted a study examining the relationship between EI and levels of pain perception in a defined population of patients. Findings indicated that individuals with higher levels of EI perceived their pain on a lower severity level (Kopera et al., 2017).

3.2.4. Interpersonal Skills

The ability to relate to others is an integral part of EI (Goleman, 1998). Prezerakos (2018) examined the role of EI in nursing leadership practices and found that EI is a vital part of creating a successful workplace environment due to the complex navigation of relationships. Leading by example and demonstrating these skills determines the overall tone of the environment.

3.3. Model Case

According to Walker and Avant (2019), the model case demonstrates a use of the concept that encompasses all its defining attributes.

Case – A nurse recently applied for a unit manager position. Her colleagues encouraged her to do so based on her reputation for stellar patient care. Following the application and interview process, she was informed that another team member had been selected for the position. She was surprised at the decision; therefore, she met with her supervisor and expressed gratitude for the consideration and inquired about ways to improve for future leadership opportunities. Following her meeting, she congratulated the new unit manager and offered support as she navigated her new role.

This case demonstrates the nurse's ability to recognize her surprise (*cognition of personal emotion*) and avoid an inappropriate reaction following the candidate selection (*ability to manage emotions*). She was also able to accept the supervisor's decision without judgment and inquired about resources and tools to grow her leadership skills (*motivation*). She demonstrated professionalism and collegiality by congratulating her co-worker and offering her support (*interpersonal skills*).

3.4. Borderline Case

The borderline case demonstrates most of the defining attributes; however, it omits some of them (Walker & Avant, 2019).

Case –A nurse applied for a unit manager position but was not selected. She remained professional with her co-workers, including the new unit manager. However, she stated that the supervisor did not make the right choice and believes she is the better candidate. She expressed that she will not put any more effort into her job since she is not

recognized as having leadership potential. She will not "go the extra mile" to help others.

In this scenario, the nurse recognizes her unhappiness with the supervisor's decision (*cognition of personal emotions*). She did not react in a negative manner and remained cordial with her co-workers (*ability to manage emotions*). The nurse failed the concept of *motivation* because she stated that she would no longer put forth any extra effort in her work. Although she remains professional, her *interpersonal skills* are affected since she will not convey the concept of teamwork among her colleagues.

3.5. Related Case

The related case has elements that are related to the concept; however, it may not include the defining attributes (Walker & Avant, 2019).

Case – A nurse is present with the surgeon when he delivers the news of biopsy findings to the patient. The results are not favourable to the patient, and he becomes very upset. The nurse remains calm and stays behind, allowing the patient to verbalize his concerns. Following this encounter, she speaks to the surgeon stating that she doesn't understand why the patient is so upset since he is 73 years old. She also says that "he has lived a long life." She admits that she had an elderly relative with the same diagnosis who suffered while trying to prolong his life.

In this scenario, the nurse offers empathy and support to the patient following the upsetting news. She displays a judgemental attitude regarding the patient's reaction to the news. Although her initial reaction conveyed empathy to the patient, the nurse was not able to remove her judgmental attitude regarding the patient's situation. The nurse displays *cognition of her emotions*; however, she is not *able to manage her emotions*. She also lacks *motivation* and *interpersonal skills* since she is passing her own judgment and not processing the patient's fears and emotions.

3.6. Contrary Case

The contrary case is the exact opposite of the model case, thereby exhibiting none of the defining attributes (Walker & Avant, 2019).

Case –The nurse enters a patient's room to administer medications for the 9 am rounds. She was running behind and worried that medications would not be delivered in a timely fashion. The patient is anxious about taking the new medications and would like to know more information about them. She states she doesn't have time to go over each one with him. She states that she only has five minutes and must move on to her next room.

In this case, the nurse focuses on the number of tasks and the amount of time it takes to complete them. She is not *cognizant of her emotions* during this time. Clearly, she has

anxiety regarding her time management. She totally disregards the patient's anxiety and the need to understand his new medications. She lacks the ability to *manage her emotions* when she informs the patient that she doesn't have time. She lacks *motivation,* and no other measures are taken to change the outcome of her tasks. *Interpersonal skill*s are not displayed in this scenario, as she did not seek assistance from her manager or co-workers to meet the patient's needs as well as complete the medication pass.

3.7. Antecedents

Antecedents are required prior to the development of a concept (Walker & Avant, 2019). Barbuto and Story (2010) established a positive correlation that "internal locus of control and thin mental boundaries" are prerequisites for the development of EI. For an individual to achieve emotional intelligence, resilience must be fostered (Cleary et al., 2018). Beauvais et al. (2013) demonstrated a positive correlation between the factors of "empowerment, resilience, and spiritual well-being, as precursors to satisfactory academic performance in nursing students. Self-determination plays an integral role in emotional stability and positivity when it exists prior to and adjacent to the development of EI (Perrealut et al., 2014).

3.8. Consequences

*"*Consequences are events that occur after the occurrence of a concept (Walker & Avant, 2019)." Due to the positive nature of EI, several themes emerged from the literature. Regarding nursing students, EI has been linked to higher achievement of academic success, the establishment of meaningful social relationships and the development of mechanisms to identify personal emotions and maintain control over them (MacCann et al., 2020).

Nurses employed in the profession display characteristics that can be applied to the workplace. Increased job satisfaction, increased retention rates, lower levels of burnout, positive work relationships, and well-being in the workplace (Soto-Rubio et al., 2020) are all consequences of workplace EI.

3.9. Empirical Referents

"Empirical referents are measurable ways to demonstrate the occurrence of the concept (Walker & Avant, 2019)." There are a variety of tools that exist to measure emotional intelligence (James et al., 2012).

The Trait Meta-Mood Scale-24 consists of three different subscales; emotional attention, emotional clarity, and emotional repair (TMMS; Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Paarfay, 1995). It has been applied in a variety of settings.

The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) measures emotional intelligence using 15 subscales, five composite scores, and a total score (Bar-On, 2004; 2006).

The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) consists of multifactor scales that measure emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2003).

In addition to validated screening tools, identified consequences of EI can be quantified. A grading scale can easily measure academic performance. Educators can develop surveys to assess students' perceptions of their social situations and stress management techniques. Nurse managers can collect data regarding employment trends and retention.

4. Discussion

Following the literature review, emotional intelligence positively affects the nursing profession. Researchers have demonstrated its use as it applies to many situations and concepts in nursing. Including EI principles in nursing education and everyday nursing practice can be quite impactful. Continued research and efforts would be beneficial.

4.1. EI and Nursing Education

Many studies have attempted to research EI and its effect on nursing education; for example, Honkavuo (2019) conducted a literature review to explore how to prepare educators to incorporate EI into didactic courses. It was concluded that this is a very complex process that warrants further investigation (Honkavuo, 2019). Nursing students were enrolled on a psychology-related course in a pre and post-test design to assess whether emotional intelligence was increased because of deliberate training (Jimenez-Rodriguez et al., 2022). The researchers concluded that students demonstrated an improvement in their resilience scores following the conclusion of the course and believe that this preparation will result in their delivery of a higher standard of care for patients (Jiménez-Rodríguez et al., 2022).

Other traits are thought to be helpful in the development of EI, such as compassion, as evidenced by Teskereci et al. 2020 study. It was concluded that nursing students who participated in the "Caring Behavior in Nursing course effectively developed compassion (Teskereci et al., 2020)." Further research is needed to explore how to prepare nursing programs to foster psychosocial skills for their students. It is possible that these interventions will help prepare future nurses for their new role in a stressful environment.

4.2. EI and Nursing Practice

Collaboration among nurses was examined in relation to emotional intelligence in a study conducted by Al-Hamdan et al. (2021). The researchers concluded that there were several positive outcomes related to emotional intelligence, such as "improved job satisfaction, better nurse retention, improved quality of patient care, and enhanced healthcare efficiency and productivity (Al-Hamden et al., 2021)."

The amount of nursing experience may also affect nurses' ability to manage the job demands and assist in their development of coping mechanisms (Mazzella-Ebstein et al., 2021). Butler, 2021 conducted a literature review to examine the role of EI for nurse leaders in response to Australia's ever-changing healthcare system. She concluded that several positive traits are intertwined in EI; thereby, positive results are achieved when EI is utilized (Butler, 2021).

The nursing profession can be influenced by the acquisition of EI, as evidenced by a literature review. It is imperative that this initiative is given priority in healthcare organizations.

5. Conclusion

Emotional intelligence's significance in nursing has been shown throughout this concept analysis. Recommendations have been suggested to incorporate EI as part of the admission process for nursing students (Cordier et al., 2015). It is also believed that principles of resilience and self-esteem should be incorporated into the nursing curriculum, so that novice nurses are prepared for entry into the workplace (Khademi et al., 2021; Batmaz et al., 2022).

Increased retention rates and job performance was shown to improve when nurses had higher levels of emotional intelligence (Cordier et al., 2015). This is also an essential skill for nurse leaders who must lead and manage nurses while maintaining quality patient care (Phillips et al., 2017; Cordier et al., 2015).

Emotional intelligence is an essential tool that can be applied to nursing at any time during one's career. It has an important place for nursing.

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