Navigating Unprecedented Challenges: A Narrative Review of Socio-Emotional Learning Competencies and Emotional Intelligence Among Nurses and Nursing Students in the COVID-19 Era

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ABSTRACT

This narrative review examines the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies and emotional intelligence (EI) among nurses and nursing students, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Emotional intelligence and Socio-Emotional Learning are interconnected concepts encompassing the effective perception, understanding, management, and utilization of emotions. EI encompasses skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness, while SEL is an educational framework designed to cultivate specific social and emotional skills in students. SEL programs aim to foster competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Within the healthcare environment, the proficiency of nurses and nursing students in EI not only impacts their personal well-being but also exerts a substantial influence on patient outcomes and the overall quality of care. The integration of SEL into the training of healthcare professionals holds the potential to augment their capacity to establish positive patient relationships, effectively manage stress, and deliver compassionate care. This study seeks to describe the influence of SEL competencies and emotional intelligence on students and nurses during and after the COVID-19 crisis. Recognizing the important nature of incorporating SEL competencies and emotional intelligence into the education and practice of nurses and nursing students is crucial for fostering psychological resilience, nurturing positive relationships, and ensuring the provision of high-quality care, particularly amidst unprecedented challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, socio-emotional learning, COVID-19, nursing

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape, the concepts of emotional intelligence (EI) and social-emotional learning (SEL) have emerged as key components of personal development and well-being within the general population. Emotional Intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively in oneself and others. Rooted in the seminal work of psychologists such as Daniel Goleman, EI encompasses skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness. On the other hand, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) encompasses the practical implementation of Emotional Intelligence (EI) within educational settings or classrooms. This involves instructional frameworks that educate individuals on the process of synthesizing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. In educational contexts, the theoretical underpinnings of

Emotional Intelligence (EI) are frequently incorporated into programs centered around Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL constitutes the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, empowering individuals to cultivate self-awareness, interpersonal understanding, responsible decision-making, and adept management of personal and others' behaviors. The objective of SEL programs is to cultivate a positive socio-emotional climate within classrooms, schools, or entire districts, ultimately aiming to enhance children's social and emotional competencies and, consequently, improve their academic achievements. The adoption of curricula emphasizing these components is posited to foster success not only in academic pursuits but also in interpersonal relationships, and, ultimately, in various aspects of life. (Brackett, M., et al., 2023; Elias M. J et al., 1997; Elbertson N.A et al., 2010; Greenberg, M. T et al., 2003; Becker, B.E., & Luthar, S.S., 2002; Catalino, R.F et al., 2004)

Understanding and managing one's emotions are fundamental aspects of mental health. As individuals encounter diverse challenges in their personal and professional lives, the ability to navigate these experiences with emotional intelligence becomes a foundation for psychological resilience. Moreover, socially competent individuals are better equipped to navigate the complexities of interpersonal relationships, contribute positively to community dynamics, and engage in constructive collaboration, all of which are foundational to the overall well-being of society. Furthermore, the significance of emotional intelligence for nursing practitioners cannot be understated, particularly considering their crucial roles in delivering compassionate and effective care, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic or any future pandemics.

The article from the National University in San Diego, California underscores the advantageous implications of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) for both pediatric and adult cohorts, both within and beyond educational settings. These benefits manifest in heightened self-awareness, enhanced academic performance, and the cultivation of positive behaviors within and beyond the confines of educational settings. From an academic standpoint, students participating in SEL initiatives demonstrated discernible improvements in overall academic grades and exhibited a proclivity for increased attendance. At the individual level, SEL programs have proven instrumental in equipping students with skills conducive to adeptly managing emotional stress, proficient problem-solving, and resisting peer pressures that may otherwise lead to participation in deleterious activities. Moreover, the acquisition of such skills not only fortifies students in their scholastic pursuits but also positions them to navigate the multifarious challenges inherent in adult life. Nevertheless, the aforementioned article references a report by the AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, which posits a critical observation. Specifically, the report noted that, *"despite their importance to education, employment, and family life, the major educational and social reforms of the K-12 system over the last few decades have not focused sufficiently on the socio-emotional factors that are crucial to learning".* (National University, San Diego CA; AEI/Brookings Working Group on Poverty and Opportunity, 2015)

Weissberg, R. stated that having good social and emotional skills for a long time can increase the chances of graduating high school, being ready for college, succeeding in a career, having positive family and work relationships, maintaining good mental health, reducing involvement in criminal activities, and actively participating in community responsibilities. (Hawkins, J.D, et al., 2008; Jones, D.E, et al., 2015; Weissberg, R., 2016)

In the healthcare setting, healthcare professionals operate in environments characterized by constant challenges,

ranging from high-stakes decision-making to emotionally charged patient interactions. Nurses, as frontline caregivers, often find themselves at the intersection of patient emotions and clinical demands. Thus, their proficiency in EI not only influences their own well-being but also significantly impacts patient outcomes and the overall quality of care. Furthermore, Emotional Intelligence, despite its significance, has historically been more commonly recognized and explored in professions like business, management, and education. However, within the past decade, there has been a noticeable increase in attention and acceptance of emotional intelligence within the field of nursing practice (Raghubir AE, 2018). Integrating SEL into the training of healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, can enhance their ability to establish empathetic connections with patients, foster effective communication, and create a supportive healthcare environment.

Khademi et al. investigated the correlation between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the Quality of Nursing Care (QoNC) as perceived by both nurses and patients. Their findings indicated that higher levels of EI in nurses positively influenced the enhancement of QoNC as assessed by both nurses and patients. Notably, EI exhibited direct effects on all dimensions of QoNC, encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Lewis et al. (2017) observed a favorable impact of EI on QoNC. Furthermore, Nightingale et al., Askari et al., Khademi, E. et al. corroborated these findings, highlighting a positive association between EI and QoNC.

Stoichkova, E established a positive and significant association between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and personal and professional performance, drawing on insights from a review of 27 articles. The interplay of emotion and cognition, as highlighted in the study, fosters adaptive perception and intelligent utilization of both, thereby improving personal, social, and professional functioning. These factors actively contribute to achieving the overarching goal of developing and empowering practitioners who can actively shape the future of healthcare.

The emergence of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, in late 2019 precipitated an unprecedented global health crisis, profoundly affecting healthcare systems worldwide. This crisis strained healthcare infrastructure and resources and necessitated significant adaptations to the traditional model of nursing education. The traditional mode of instruction, characterized by in-person, face-to-face teaching, encountered significant challenges due to safety considerations and the implementation of social distancing measures. To ensure the continuity of nursing education, rapid adaptations became imperative. Educational institutions swiftly adapted remote learning methods and virtual clinical simulations, providing students with alternative avenues for learning while adhering to safety protocols.

Leaver C. et al. stated that the early call for health profession schools to actively contribute to the COVID-19 public health response entailed a swift adjustment of curricula to align with contemporary pandemic response measures, aiming to curtail community transmission and ensure a secure clinical learning environments for both students and faculty. Following the guidance provided by the CDC, numerous nursing schools promptly ceased in-person course delivery, initiating a rapid overhaul of program structures to mitigate potential risks to faculty, students, and staff (Leaver C. et al, 2022). As the pandemic spread throughout the United States, educational institutions nationwide shuttered their campuses, compelling nurse educators in both baccalaureate and associate degree programs to cancel on-site classes and laboratory sessions (Smith, S. and Farra, S., 2022). As the pandemic persisted, an increasing number of nursing schools opted to suspend on-campus classes, reconfigured workspaces for faculty and staff, and implemented curriculum adjustments to

safeguard the academic progression of students. Leaver, C. et al. additionally observed that the mandated shift to online course delivery and assessments was executed with limited time for the adjustment of teaching and learning methodologies for instructors. Numerous faculty members lacked familiarity with remote teaching and virtual advising, necessitating support to navigate the transition to digital learning platforms and course redesign. Academic administrators scrutinized faculty workload, grading criteria, and testing procedures, concurrently evaluating strategies to address academic credit hours and comply with regulatory requirements. (Leaver, C. et al., 2022; Smith, S. and Farra, S., 2022)

Smith, S. and Farra, S also observed that the pandemic has had repercussions on the education of healthcare professionals, including those in training to become new nurses. Nurse educators encountered challenges in facilitating clinical experiences, as healthcare agencies restricted student access due to heightened patient numbers and limited availability of personal protective equipment (PPE). (Smith, S. and Farra, 2022)

In the Philippines, Dayagbil, F. et al. likewise noted that a notable consequence of the global health crisis is the widespread adoption of online learning methods to mitigate the risks associated with face-to-face interactions. Universities have been compelled to transition from traditional face-to-face delivery to online modalities in response to the pandemic. Nevertheless, this abrupt shift has posed challenges, particularly for learners lacking access to technology. The use of online learning modalities during the pandemic has exacerbated the divide between those with and without internet connectivity. The sustained academic engagement for both teachers and students has become a formidable challenge due to issues related to access and internet connectivity. Recognizing the limitations on connectivity, the concept of flexible learning has emerged

as a viable option for online education, especially in higher education institutions in the Philippines. (Dayagbil, F. et al., 2021)

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, nursing students assumed crucial, albeit limited roles in healthcare settings, providing essential and critical support to the overwhelmed healthcare workforce such as health screenings, monitoring patients, and assisting with basic care tasks. Their involvement in pandemic response efforts not only bolstered the healthcare system but also afforded them valuable hands-on experience in a real-world crisis situation. However, these roles came with significant effects on nursing students. The pandemic placed them in high-stress environments, increased workloads, emotional challenges, and exposure to potential health risks. Additionally, the absence of traditional clinical experiences impacted their skill development and clinical confidence.

Gao J et al. highlighted the association of COVID-19 pandemic with an increase in mental health difficulties, encompassing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and stress. Nursing students, particularly those in internship roles, sometimes faced stigmatization, harassment, and unfounded blame as possible COVID-19 carriers, despite their critical role in combating the virus and other illnesses. (Gao, J et al., 2021)

Conversely, Aljarboa BE and colleagues noted that, while considerable scholarly attention has been dedicated to investigating resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a scarcity of studies exploring its relationship with emotional intelligence. Specifically, research within the field of nursing during a pandemic has been limited concerning resilience and emotional intelligence. Despite the abundance of research on resilience, there has been a lack of focus on understanding how emotional intelligence influences the resilience of nurses and nursing students amid a global health crisis. This gap in knowledge is significant, given that emotional intelligence is widely acknowledged for its ability to

enhance an individual's emotional management, communication skills, and ability to navigate challenging situations. These qualities are particularly vital for nurses operating in high-stress environments during a pandemic (Aljarboa BE et al., 2022).

Oliveira, S. et al. observed that educators are required to effectively address the academic as well as the social and emotional needs of students. Nonetheless, the initial training of teachers predominantly concentrates on the academic aspect, with a notable absence of explicit training in the Social and Emotional Competence (SEC) domain. The lack of training primarily revolves around intra-personal competences, such as the ability to identify and manage emotions and behaviors, as well as monitor progress toward goals, influencing both the well-being of educators and the academic achievements and behaviors of students. Schonert-Reichl, K.A et al. remarked that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has been occasionally referred to as "the missing piece" in education, signifying its integral connection to academic success, which, despite its critical importance, has only gained explicit attention and recognition in recent times. Further, there is limited understanding regarding the extent to which state-level teacher certification requirements encompass SEL knowledge or skills, and whether pre-service teacher education programs within U.S. colleges of education integrate SEL content into coursework and teacher training (Oliveira S. et al., 2021; Schonert-Reichl, K. A et al., 2017; Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T., 2009; Crain, T. L., et al., 2017). Educational institutions are progressively incorporating social-emotional programs and curricula to attend to these requirements. School nurse educators play a crucial role in caring for many of these students and have the capacity to foster positive outcomes. Nevertheless, a substantial number of school nurse educators lack awareness of the available social-emotional programs and curricula (Sharkey, A, 2020). Additionally, as observed by Vargas Valencia ÁR et al., despite the positive results of the inclusion of education regarding EI in school curriculums, it is not common to find it in nursing. (Vargas Valencia ÁR et al., 2022)

As the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis unfolded, the relevance of individuals' socio-emotional skills and emotional intelligence in effectively confronting its challenges became increasingly apparent. Specifically, the significance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) emerged as a pivotal concept with the capacity to influence patient care quality, outcomes, decision-making, critical thinking, and the general well-being of nurses actively engaged in practice, along with its relevance in the education of prospective nurses. (Raghubir AE, 2018)

This study seeks to describe the impact of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies and emotional intelligence among nurses and students during and after the COVID-19 crisis. Specifically, it aims to:

a. To understand how COVID-19 has affected the emotional well-being of nurses and students.
b. To identify the coping mechanisms and support systems that nurses and students have utilized to manage emotional stress during and after the COVID-19 crisis.
c. To identify effective strategies for enhancing the socio-emotional competencies or skills of nurses and students.
d. To examine how COVID-19 has impacted nursing education

METHODS
The goal of this review is to describe the impact of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies and emotional intelligence among nurses and students during and after the COVID-19 crisis. A review of the academic literature was conducted, utilizing reputable databases, including PubMed and ScienceDirect.

Search terms such as "Emotional Intelligence," "Socio-Emotional Skills," "Nursing," "Nursing Education," "COVID," and "COVID-19" were employed, in combination with Boolean operators and/or. Secondary search was also carried out on Google Scholar to capture potential gray literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Effects of COVID-19 on Nurses' and Nursing Students' Well-Being

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly brought about profound emotional and psychological effects on nurses as they carry out their duties. The unprecedented challenges, such as increased workload, resource shortages, and the constant risk of infection, have led to heightened stress levels among nurses. The fear of contracting the virus and transmitting it to loved ones, coupled with the emotional toll of witnessing patient suffering and loss, contributes to elevated levels of anxiety and emotional exhaustion. The relentless demands of the pandemic have also disrupted the work-life balance for many nurses, leading to feelings of burnout and fatigue.

Huerta-González S. et al. identified through a systematic review the predominant psychological effects perceived by frontline nurses engaged in caring for individuals with COVID-19. These effects encompassed fear, anxiety, stress, social isolation, depressive symptoms, uncertainty, and frustration. These findings were further reported by Da Rosa, P. et al. among South Dakota nurses whose emotional distress were apparently caused by heightened concerns about exacerbating pre-existing mental health conditions, dissatisfaction with their jobs, increased exposure to COVID-19 cases through direct clinical contact, fear of workplace infection, and a sense of unpreparedness for the pandemic. These factors independently predicted elevated levels of emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and stress.

Aloweni F in their longitudinal study reported that there was a significant rise in the overall number of nurses reporting elevated burnout and diminished job dedication in 2021 as compared to the preceding year and additionally, a notable reduction in the number of nurses expressing a sense of appreciation from their department or hospital.

According to the United Nations (2020), healthcare workers across various countries have commonly reported a range of psychological effects. These include a notable need for psychological support, high rates of depression, anxiety, insomnia, and substantial levels of psychological distress.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had a profound impact on the well-being of nursing students. The abrupt shift to online learning and clinical placement disruptions, aimed at minimizing the spread of the virus, introduced significant challenges to the education of nursing students. The heightened stress and anxiety levels stemming from the uncertainty of the pandemic, potential exposure to the virus, and the increased workload for nursing students posed significant threats to their mental health and well-being. Burnout and feelings of isolation became more prevalent as students struggled to balance academic demands with personal responsibilities and the fear of contracting the virus.

Joseph RA et al. highlighted a recurring theme within the nursing literature, which is the prevalence of fear and uncertainty among nursing students These emotions often stem from concerns related to the perceived risk of contracting the virus, the scarcity of personal protective equipment, a sense of inadequacy in both physical and emotional preparedness, anxiety regarding academic performance, anxiety concerning exposure to the virus in clinical settings, and concerns about the well-being of their family members, as supported in various studies (Collado-Boira et al. (2020), Lovrić et al. (2020), Ramos-Morcillo et al. (2020), and Savitsky et al. (2020)). Moreover, Rohde, G. et al. reported that the COVID-19

pandemic had a detrimental impact on the quality of life (QOL) and the physical and mental health of nursing students, concurrently intensifying feelings of isolation. Falguera, C. and colleagues also reported that among the 261 nursing students who participated in their study, over half of them experienced symptoms of dysfunctional anxiety, which includes dizziness, sleep disturbances, tonic immobility, appetite loss, nausea, or abdominal distress.

The research conducted by Yi Q-F. and colleagues delved into the perceptions and experiences of undergraduate nursing students who participated in an eight-week e-internship program amid the COVID-19 pandemic, utilizing phenomenological methods. The findings revealed that the abrupt onset of the pandemic resulting in the termination of on-site internships, and the introduction of unfamiliar e-internships, nursing students developed a series of psychological changes and expressed feelings of regret and anxiety in relation to the cancellation of their clinical internships.

Gao J. et al conducted a survey to assess the mental health status of college nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study revealed that there were extensive and profound psychological repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic among the 1,532 nursing students to include: 44.5% who exhibited symptoms indicative of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 2.9% displayed signs of depression, 2.9% reported experiencing anxiety, 1.1% reported stress-related symptoms, and 22.8% showed signs of insomnia. A few experienced severe symptoms of PTSD (0.3%), depression (0.1%), anxiety (0.2%), stress (0.1%), and insomnia (0.1%). This global health crisis triggered a range of psychological symptoms, including fear, irritability, uncertainty, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, stress, and insomnia among individuals worldwide. The effects were exacerbated by factors such as lockdown measures, economic hardships, and the scarcity of protective equipment like masks and alcohol-based disinfectants. These additional stressors have intensified feelings of social isolation, loneliness, and the aforementioned negative psychological symptoms, and have even been associated with delirium, self-harm, and suicide. (Ettman et al., 2020; Twenge and Joiner, 2020).

Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems for Nurses and Nursing Students During and After COVID-19

Bailey, A. defined coping mechanisms as strategic approaches employed by individuals to manage stress and navigate uncomfortable emotions. These mechanisms play a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse effects of stress.

Coping mechanisms are essential tools for nurses and nursing students to manage the psychological effects of not just the pandemic, but also the heightened emotional intensity during clinical rotations. In these settings, nurses and students frequently encounter patients undergoing pain, suffering, or distress. Furthermore, they must navigate intricate interpersonal relationships with patients, families, and colleagues, all of which can generate a heightened emotional state.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology (2023), resilience is defined as the successful adaptation to challenging life experiences, characterized by mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility, as well as adjustment to both external and internal demands.

Rohde, G. et al. reported that a significant proportion of the students involved in their study employed adaptive strategies and resilience factors to contend with the challenges posed by the pandemic. This suggests that students may have acquired additional skills and a resilient mindset that could prove beneficial in their future professional endeavors.

Savitsky, B. et al. remarked that higher levels of resilience and self-esteem are correlated with reduced anxiety. In a

separate study conducted by Savitsky, B. et al. in 2021, they underscore the significance of resilience as a crucial mechanism for coping and adaptation, noting that heightened resilience and self-esteem is correlated with lower levels of anxiety. These results align with the notion that individuals possessing elevated resilience and self-esteem were more likely to employ constructive and active strategies in coping with stressors (Carver and Scheier, 1989).

Individuals exhibiting higher levels of resilience exhibit strong life beliefs, possess adaptive flexibility, and are capable of accommodating change (Amsrud, KE et al., 2019). Amsrud, KE et al. further underscored the significance of educational institutions fostering a culture rooted in trustworthiness for nursing students which plays a pivotal role in nurturing resilience with educators serving as role models, exemplifying the values and interpersonal competencies that students are expected to exhibit in their nursing practice. When nursing students flourish in an educational setting characterized by trustworthiness, they are poised to engage in a vital shift, directing their focus beyond themselves. This shift enhances students' capacity to establish credibility in their compassionate presence within the lives of others, thereby cultivating a readiness to provide care.

Ramalisa RJ et al. asserted that reinforcing nurses' resilience within their professional milieu can be accomplished by augmenting nurse–patient relationships. Continuous training and skill development contributes to enhancing the competency and confidence of nurses, concurrently fortifying their resilience. A crucial element to underscore is the significance of supportive systems in the work environment, where nurses acknowledging each other's contributions, sharing experiences and knowledge, which collectively impacts on the quality care to mental health care users. Lastly, the encouragement and support of spirituality and exercise contribute to nurses' ability to cope with challenges, fostering resilience.

Such measures afford nurses the opportunity for rejuvenation, thereby enabling them to effectively navigate challenges and enhance their overall resilience.

Windy Watt (2021) highlighted three strategies for fostering resilience in nursing teams: engagement in formal education programs, the provision of meaningful recognition, and the promotion of social support. Notably, nurse leaders can play a pivotal role by demonstrating and advocating for self-care activities and techniques, engaging in discussions and modeling resilience, identifying behaviors associated with burnout and compassion fatigue, and imparting awareness of personal stressors and triggers.

In the context of nursing education, resilience enhances nursing students' ability to adapt to the dynamic and often stressful healthcare environment. The nursing profession involves constantly evolving knowledge, technology, and clinical practices, and resilient students are more open to learning, embracing change, and seeking opportunities for professional growth. Furthermore, in high-pressure healthcare settings, resilient nurses can better cope with stressful situations and maintain their emotional well-being, and are less susceptible to burnout and compassion fatigue, which are common challenges in the nursing profession.

Emotional intelligence, which is a fundamental component of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), encompasses the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions, as well as the capacity to understand and influence the emotions of others. In a recent work done by Manon Dugué et al, it was noted that integrating this psychological element into educational programs would bolster adaptive behavior and resilience in demanding situations (Schneider, Lyons, & Khazon, 2013).

In a scoping review conducted by Majrashi A. and colleagues, optimism emerged as a crucial coping strategy for nursing students navigating virtual learning environments. The study affirms optimism as a

psychological adaptation to the new learning structures necessitated by the pandemic. The findings highlight nursing students' persistent efforts to adopt behaviors promoting their well-being while anticipating a return to traditional learning methods. Additionally, the review identifies transference as another effective coping mechanism for nursing students with positive outlooks on their nursing education path. These students manage the challenges of virtual learning, high-risk clinical training environments, and heavy workloads through physical exercises and social interactions.

Savitsky B. et al. noted that the utilization of humor was correlated with reduced levels of anxiety. Humor can have notable effects in stress situations. When individuals employ humor as a coping mechanism during stressful circumstances, it often serves to alleviate tension and reduce perceived stress levels (Savitsky B. et al., 2020). Additionally, it has been mentioned in Science lectures that the release of endorphins associated with laughter can promote a sense of well-being and relaxation, counteracting the physiological responses to stress. Galloway, G and Cropley, A. discussed the outcomes of numerous empirical studies, revealing that humor, in general, can positively impact mental health and usually manifested as laughter is linked to a decrease in certain pre-existing mental health issues. Additionally, as a psychological process, the possession of a sense of humor appears to have a mitigating effect in the perceived intensity of negative life events. Gelkopf M. likewise observed that humor or laughter constitutes a readily applicable and natural therapeutic approach applicable across various therapeutic contexts. Implemented by a diverse, multi-professional staff, its effects could, at the very least, provide temporary relief from the daily distress encountered by individuals with serious mental illness.

Another commonly employed and efficacious approach involves seeking emotional support from friends, family, and peers, as maintaining social connections can alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness, which are common during times of crisis. Additionally, practicing self-care activities like physical exercise, meditation, and ensuring sufficient sleep can contribute to stress and anxiety reduction. These topics are typically addressed in discussions related to Mental Health or Wellness.

Maben J and Bridges J highlighted that amid the pandemic, nurses may collaborate with individuals who are not their regular team members. Consequently, teams are urged to offer mutual support and devise strategies to swiftly ensure that new members feel secure, esteemed, and embraced. While resilience is crucial, nurses also require support from their employers, teams, the profession, and the public, in the form of tangible actions and resources. Miotto, K., et al remarked that there is an anticipated increase in the need for emotional support and mental health services among healthcare workers (HCWs) due to the immediate demands of performing critical work and caring for hospitalized patients. The authors expressed the hope that other institutions can glean insights from their experience and leverage existing components within their health systems, to offer HCWs personalized emotional support and mental health interventions. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors posited that these circumstances provide an opportunity to construct and assess enduring emotional support and mental health systems.

Nursing students should also explore various support systems to help them cope effectively. Academic institutions can provide support through counseling services administered by trained personnel like registered psychologists or counselors, both in-person and online, to address students' emotional needs. These services can also educate students on identifying signs of psychological distress and seeking help when needed. Faculty and mentors should maintain open lines of communication and

be attentive to their students' emotional well-being, offering guidance and understanding as they navigate the challenges of their education. Online support groups, whether formal or informal, can be a valuable resource, enabling students to connect with others who share similar experiences and emotions, fostering a sense of community and understanding.

Huang L and colleagues have underscored the necessity for additional research to expound the relationship between nurses' coping strategies and their emotional responses in the context of a major infectious disease like COVID-19. They noted the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the effects of COVID-19 on nurses' emotional responses and coping strategies. The challenges posed by the pandemic, including fear of infection, the emotional toll of witnessing patient suffering, and the strain on healthcare systems, can significantly impact the emotional well-being of nurses.

Enhancing Socio-Emotional Competencies or Skills of Nursing Students: Effective Strategies

In the Philippines healthcare landscape, where nurses are a vital component of the healthcare system, integrating comprehensive EI training is an imperative. The integration of EI courses into the curriculum, particularly during the first year of nursing education, has the potential to empower students to cultivate emotional competence early in their academic journey. This approach aligns perfectly with the objective of producing well-rounded, emotionally aware nurses who can excel, not only in their clinical skills but also, in their ability to provide empathetic, patient-centered care. However, Manon Dugué et al. remarked that *"training based on emotional development is scarce in nursing education programs or healthcare education in general while emotions are an integral part of the care professions."* By implementing EI training during the student's educational journey, the curriculum can act as a framework for the development of emotional intelligence. Through a comprehensive approach to EI education, nursing students can gain, not only a theoretical understanding of the concept, but also be provided with the opportunities to apply these skills in practical clinical settings. This would eventually produce a generation of nurses who are clinically proficient, emotionally adept, and thus enhancing the quality of healthcare and patient experiences in the country.

In the literature review conducted by Manon Dugué and colleagues, eleven studies were identified, characterized by diverse programs aimed at developing intervention strategies to enhance emotional skills in nursing education (Donnaint, Marchand, & Gagnayre, 2016; Gómez-Díaz, et al., 2017; Goudarzian et al., 2019; Hurley, Hutchinson, Kozlowski, Gadd & Vorst, 2019; Orak et al., 2016; Ramadan, Abdel-Latif Abdel-Sattar, Abozeid, Abd Elwahab El Sayed, 2020; Shahbazi, Heidari, Sureshjani, & Rezaei, 2018; Szeles, 2015; Teskereci, Öncel & Arslan, 2020). These strategies utilized diverse formats such as traditional lectures, role plays, case studies, and group discussions conducted through several sessions. (Choi et al., 2015; Erkayiran & Damirkiran, 2018; Goudarzian et al., 2019; Orak et al., 2016; Ramadan et al., 2020; Shahbazi et al., 2018; Teskereci et al., 2020). A few programs focused on four-hour workshops on specific topics (Gómez-Díaz et al., 2017; Hurley et al., 2019), while individual interviews analyzing students' emotional situations (Donnaint et al., 2016; Szeles, 2015) were also explored. The outcomes of most of these studies have demonstrated significant enhancements in Emotional Intelligence (EI) among those who participated in these interventions (Choi et al., 2015; Donnaint et al., 2016; Erkayiran & Demirkiran, 2018; Gómez-Díaz, et al., 2017; Goudarzian et al., 2019; Hurley et al., 2019; Shahbazi et al., 2018). Notably, the study by Ramadan and

colleagues not only reported substantial improvements in EI but also revealed significant enhancements in clinical performance. These collective findings underscore the potential for increasing EI through targeted educational interventions, thereby advocating for the integration of EI training within nursing programs as a means to enhance the well-being of nursing students.

Hamadi HY and colleagues emphasized the importance of implementing stress management programs to facilitate the development of effective coping skills. These programs can incorporate a range of straightforward strategies to help individuals better manage stress. Examples of such strategies include teaching deep-breathing exercises to promote stress relief and relaxation, providing guidance on time management to help individuals prioritize tasks and set achievable goals, introducing mindfulness practices like meditation and yoga to enhance self-awareness, and teaching cognitive-behavioral techniques to identify and challenge negative thought patterns. Encouraging individuals to build and utilize social support networks for emotional assistance during stressful periods is another valuable approach. Additionally, promoting regular physical activity as a means of releasing tension, emphasizing good sleep hygiene for overall stress management, and introducing relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation can equip individuals with the skills needed to effectively cope with stress.

As an educator in one of the nursing schools, I posed this question to my BS Nursing students: 'In what manner can Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) be incorporated into their educational journey?' One student, in response, provided this answer that encapsulates the essential elements required for the integration of SEL, as follows: *"As a nursing student, I believe there are various ways our clinical instructors can help us further develop our socio-emotional skills. First and foremost, it's incredibly valuable when our clinical instructors lead by example and act as positive role models. When they demonstrate self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and strong relationship skills in their interactions with us, patients, and colleagues, it truly inspires us to follow suit and grow in these areas. Reflection and feedback are essential aspects of our learning journey. When our clinical instructors encourage us to reflect on our emotions, behaviors, and interactions during clinical experiences and provide regular feedback, it helps us become more self-aware and identify areas where we can improve our socio-emotional skills. I find it incredibly helpful when our instructors teach us techniques for emotional regulation. Learning strategies such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, and stress management techniques equips us with the tools to effectively manage our emotions during challenging situations, which in turn enhances our self-management skills. Experiential learning is a powerful way to foster our social awareness and relationship skills. When our instructors create opportunities for us to interact with patients from diverse backgrounds, develop cultural competence, and show empathy towards their unique circumstances, it greatly enhances our understanding and ability to connect with others."* (Student X)

Educators can modify or adapt certain EI strategies depending on the learning environment, characteristics of their students and the applicability of a particular training program.

One of the helpful tools in addressing the EI and SEL skills of students and even educators is the Greater Good in Education initiative, an endeavor of the Greater Good Science Center (GGSC) at UC Berkeley. The GGSC focuses on the multidisciplinary exploration of well-being, drawing insights from psychology, sociology, and

neuroscience. Its mission is to impart skills that nurture the flourishing of individuals and foster a resilient, compassionate society, often referred to as "the science of a meaningful life." In February 2020, the GGSC unveiled the Greater Good in Education website, a repository of free, evidence-based strategies and techniques designed to support the social, emotional, and ethical development of students. Additionally, it provides resources for enhancing the well-being of educators and contributes to the cultivation of positive school environments. The website further offers a range of practices to enhance the well-being of both students and adults, coupled with comprehensive guidelines covering activity planning, execution, and the underlying research supporting these initiatives.

Manon Dugué and colleagues' recommendations align with the evolving demands of the healthcare landscape, where the importance of emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized. However, it is crucial to have customized training courses or tailor fit these courses to the specific needs and demands of nursing education to bolster specific EI branches.

Impact of COVID-19 on Nursing Education

COVID-19 has brought about substantial changes in nursing education on a global scale, affecting both academic and clinical aspects. The pandemic prompted an immediate shift to online learning, requiring nursing programs worldwide to rapidly adapt to digital platforms and technologies to deliver theoretical content. In the clinical training domain, safety concerns have prompted educational institutions to introduce simulation and virtual clinical experiences.

Agu CF and colleagues observed that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to adhere to prevention protocols, numerous higher education institutions transitioned from traditional face-to-face teaching to a virtual mode of instruction. Additionally, content that was traditionally taught exclusively in a face-to-face setting had to be swiftly adapted for online delivery, necessitating training for educators to conduct virtual classroom sessions as required. However, this adaptation came at a cost, limiting the opportunities for students to develop clinical skills and gain practical experience, Educators found themselves compelled to acquire the skills to navigate and effectively deliver course content in an online environment. Furthermore, students' families and guardians were required to provide the necessary technology and internet services to facilitate access to online classes (Agu C. et al., 2021).

Developing clinical skills and gaining practical experience is crucial for nursing students for it forms the basis for providing competent and effective patient care, encompassing tasks like medication administration and assessments. Practical experience helps students apply theoretical knowledge to real-world situations, fostering a deeper understanding of nursing concepts. Engaging in clinical scenarios cultivates critical thinking, decision-making, and adaptability, essential skills in the dynamic healthcare environment.

Berdida, D. and Grande, R. noted that nursing schools modified their curricula to incorporate online classes, employing strategies such as simulations to address potential learning gaps among students and achieve desired learning outcomes. Berdida, D. et al. elucidated that nursing students share their learning insights through diverse modes of communication, including textual content (e.g., tweets), visual representations (e.g., snaps), and video content (e.g., TikTok, YouTube), leveraging the prevalent use of social media as a medium for self-expression. The materials employed during return demonstrations, encompassing both skill-specific resources and improvised substitutes for conventional equipment, were disseminated by nursing students across social media platforms. Notably,

YouTube, a prominent social media platform, serves as a repository for recorded videos featuring nursing students' return demonstrations, which encompass activities such as urinary catheterization, cord care, newborn bathing, and perineal care. Of particular interest is the observation that these videos depict students ingeniously utilizing everyday household items as cost-effective simulators. (Berdida, D. and Grande, R. 2022; Berdida, D. et al., 2023). Presently, the acquisition of nursing skills has also become more accessible due to the abundance of instructional videos available on platforms like YouTube. These videos offer students the opportunity to watch demonstrations repeatedly, facilitating the development of essential skills. Drawing upon the researcher's observations, students have expressed interest and ease in learning when utilizing nursing care videos from YouTube that are not only simplified but also visually engaging. This accessibility to online resources further enhances the learning experience and skill development for nursing students.

Clariot et al., Muckler et al., and Talley & Watts noted that prior research has outlined diverse materials and equipment for instructing laboratory skills courses. Utilizing computers or virtual reality simulators, as well as cost-effective resources such as PVC pipes, cardboard boxes, and handmade mannequins, has been discussed. In response to the global shift towards online education, students worldwide have resorted to utilizing household items as improvised simulators to demonstrate their skills in conducting online skills laboratory courses, as evidenced in studies by Angelina et al. and Van Der Wege & Keil. (Clariot et al., 2020; Muckler et al., 2017; Talley, M. & Watts, P., 2020; Angelina, J. et al., 2021; Van Der Wege, M. & Keil, S, 2021)

Nevertheless, Baticulon, R.E., et al. argued that medical students were concerned that they were not learning essential skills or getting ample patient exposure, concluding that no amount of online learning could replace the actual experience of delivering a newborn, taking care of patients from admission to discharge, or assisting in operating room procedures. Medical students doubted the readiness of their schools to transition to online learning. They cited lack of guidelines, unfair policies, haphazard class schedules, low quality of teaching materials, ineffective teaching strategies, and excessive class requirements. Also, there were students who could not concentrate because they were constantly exposed to conflict among family members. Respondents said that studying topics on their own was more difficult compared with studying topics that teachers had previously discussed in a lecture. (Baticulon, R.E., et al., 2021)

Molato, B. and Sehularo, L. highlighted the intricate nature of nursing education, encompassing both theoretical and practical components, which collectively contribute to program efficacy. However, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a considerable challenge for nurse educators in delivering the clinical aspect through online platforms. Despite the perceived advantages of online learning during the pandemic, obstacles were encountered by student nurses, as elucidated in Goodwin, J. et al.'s (2022) study. The literature indicates that students resorted to using phones for online learning due to a lack of alternative resources, such as laptops. This adaptation was suboptimal, as phones are typically unsuitable for effective online learning. Furthermore, some nursing students found themselves compelled to visit Internet cafes to fulfill assignments and homework obligations, exacerbating the challenges associated with resource limitations. Bester, P. et al. (2021) corroborated these findings, emphasizing the prevalent issues related to access to a stable Internet connection during this period. (Molato, B. and Sehularo, L., 2022; Goodwin, J. et. al., 2022; Bester, P. et. al., 2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced nursing education in the Philippines. As an educator in one of the

nursing schools in the City of Biñan, Philippines, it was imperative and necessary to adapt to the new online teaching environment to deliver the Medical-Surgical (Med-Surg) subject. Initially, navigating the online platform proved to be a significant hurdle, a steep learning curve, given that it was my first experience with this particular technology. The abrupt shift to online instruction necessitated rapid skill development in using digital tools for effective teaching.

In addition, the dynamics of online learning also affected student participation. Some students were less responsive and often chose not to answer questions or engage actively in the virtual classroom. Others chose not to activate their cameras during online classes, thereby reducing the visibility and interaction between educator and learners. This reticence to open cameras may have been due to various factors, including technological constraints, privacy concerns, or other personal reasons. However, this limited visual engagement posed a challenge in assessing students' understanding and engagement with the course material. This shift in participation patterns may have been influenced by the novelty of remote learning environment, reduced instructor-learner contact, learners' screening their unpreparedness or simply unwillingness to participate actively in discussions and questioning.

According to Head, M. et al., the transition of schools of nursing from traditional in-person learning to remote learning imposed several challenges on students. These included the necessity to adapt to learning through recorded lectures, narrated PowerPoint presentations, and Zoom classes, which students found to be more time-consuming and demanding. The administration of online exams also posed difficulties for the students. The abrupt relocation of students off campus introduced issues related to access to reliable technology or they vie for bandwidth shared with other family members or roommates. The absence of resources typically available on college campuses, including access to tutoring, collaboration with peers, and interaction with faculty, exacerbated students' feelings of disconnection. This sense of disconnection, in turn, was associated with self-reported declines in motivation and accountability and an increase in procrastination. (Head, M. et al., 2022)

Head, M. et al. noted that the loss of opportunities for hands-on care practice disrupted the development of knowledge application and skill-building among students. Proficiency in nursing is closely tied to the repeated practice of essential skills, an opportunity that was curtailed during the pandemic. Virtual programs attempting to simulate clinical experiences introduced as a substitute for in-person experiences, often proved time-consuming and confusing for students. Perhaps the most significant consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of nursing education was the profound sense of isolation resulting from the shift to remote learning, which effectively eliminated most interpersonal contact, a critical aspect of the nursing learning experience (Head, M. et al., 2022).

Kaveh, O., et al. also asserted that a notable consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was inadequate skill acquisition, potentially resulting in diminished quality of clinical nursing education (CNE), as demonstrated by the experiences recounted by the participants in this study.

The impact of COVID-19 on nursing education has been profound and multifaceted. It has necessitated rapid adaptation to online learning, introduced challenges in skill acquisition and application, and underscored the importance of addressing the psychological and technological impact of this shift of education methodologies. It has highlighted the need for ongoing innovation and resilience in nursing education to address the complex and evolving demands of the healthcare landscape. To mitigate these negative effects, educational institutions

need to implement strategies that provide emotional support, foster resilience, and enhance the overall well-being of nursing students during and beyond the pandemic, recognizing the unique challenges they face in their pursuit of nursing education and training.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is a growing recognition of emotional intelligence (EI) and socio-emotional learning within the healthcare landscape. This review emphasizes the necessity of tailoring courses to the specific needs of nursing education, indicating that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be optimal. By developing customized training programs that address the unique demands of nursing roles, educators can effectively enhance specific branches of emotional intelligence crucial for success in clinical settings.

The collective findings from this narrative review highlight the potential of targeted educational interventions to elevate emotional intelligence among nursing students and nurses. The integration of EI training within healthcare institutions and nursing programs emerges as a key recommendation, as it not only equips individuals with essential emotional skills but also contributes to the overall well-being of students and nurses. This emphasis on emotional intelligence aims to fortify the resilience of nurses, preparing them to navigate the dynamic and ever-changing structure of healthcare and the demands of patients.

Considering the substantial psychological impact of COVID-19 on nurses and nursing students, effective coping mechanisms and support systems can significantly alleviate these effects. The promotion of social support, self-care, resilience, and adaptability emerges as crucial strategies for managing fear, uncertainty, anxiety, and stress.

Ultimately, the research advocates for the proactive integration of EI training as a means to empower students and nurses, ensuring they possess the emotional competence requisite for excelling in clinical roles. This approach, characterized by fostering of emotional intelligence through tailored educational interventions, aims to enhance the adaptability and responsiveness of nurses. By doing so, it contributes to the overall resilience of the healthcare workforce in the face of evolving challenges.

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