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

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Abstract

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. 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.

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. 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

Most students receiving an education that focuses only on college entrance exams experience stress to adjust to college life, experiencing various relationships and changed school environment of a college. In addition, because of the latest increase of youth unemployment, many college students consider employment and career rather than enjoy romance of a college. 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.

Salovey and Mayer [3] said that people with high emotional intelligence recognize given environment and reality realistically and control sensibility so understand their purpose clearly and act suitably, and emotional intelligence is the ability to evaluate own and other feeling, to control this feeling effectively, and to use this feeling to plan and achieve own life [3]. 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 [4-5]. Stress coping is an act in doing something to minimize losses from stress factors and to emerge from stress, so helps adjust to a stress situation [6]. However, in case of impertinent stress coping, students do not adjust to college life or study [7], so it is important to understand stress coping to manage stress [2]. Lately, it is reported that it is effective to consider individual intrinsic characteristics as stress coping strategy of nursing students, so an interest in emotional intelligence of them has increased.

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. However, studies targeting nursing students are only Emotional Intelligence and Stress Coping [2, 8, 9] and Clinical Performance [10-11], so are insufficient yet, and study establishing the relationship between emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life is rare. 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 did a convenience sampling of first and second graders in a four-year-course nursing department located in W City. 166 objects were calculated when the number of objects was calculated by using G*power 3.1.5 Program with significance level of two tailed test .05, the size of an interim effect in multiple regression analysis .15, and 95% of test power [12]. The study did a convenience sampling of 250 objects by considering wastage rates, and 238 objects understood the purpose of the study and did written consent of participation in the study spontaneously, so drew up a questionnaire, and 227 objects except for 4 objects whose materials are poor were selected as the final objects of study.

2.2. Measurements

2.2.1. Emotional Intelligence

The study used a tool that Wong and Law [13] Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) was adapted by Jung [14]. WLEIS is total 16 questions consisting of 7-point Likert Scale with 4 questions of self-emotion recognition, 4 questions of other's emotion recognition, 4 question of emotional control, and 4 questions of emotional use. Each question is from 'so yes' 7 points to 'not even' 1 point, and total score is from 16 points to 112 points. On development of Wong and Law [13]'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. In a study of Jung [14], 'understanding self-emotion' is .91, 'understanding other's emotion' is .89, 'emotional use' is .89, and 'emotional control' is .89. 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 [15] adapted Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI) developed by Amirkhan [16] 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. Each question is from 'taking a lot' 3 points to 'never taking' 1 point, so total score is from 33 points to 99 points. On development of Amirkhan [16]'s tool, Cronbach's α is that 'social support approach' is .93, 'evasion-oriented coping' is .84, and 'problem-solution coping' is .89. In a study of Shin and Kim [15], the whole Cronbach's α is .84, and sub-domains are that 'social support approach' is .90, 'evasion-oriented coping' is .67, and 'problem-solution coping' is .88. The whole Cronbach's α of this study is 79, and sub-domains are that 'social support approach' is .83, 'evasion-oriented coping' is .68, and 'problem-solution coping' is .79.

2.2.3. Adjustment to College Life

College adjustment scale developed by Jung and Park [17] was used. This tool has total 19 questions consisting of 5 sub-domains. This consists of 5-point Likert Scale of 4 questions about personal relations, 4 questions about career preparation, 4 questions about individual psychology, and 3 questions about social experience. Each question is from 'so yes' 5 points to 'not even' 1 point, so total score is from 19 points to 95 points. On development of Jung and Park [17]'s tool, the whole Cronbach's α is .86, and sub-domains are that 'school activities' is .78, 'career preparation' is .77, 'individual psychology' is .77, 'personal relations' is .79, and 'social experience' is .70. The whole Cronbach's α of this study is .86, and sub-domains are that 'school activities' is .68, 'career preparation' is .78, 'individual psychology' is .71, 'personal relations' is .74, and 'social experience' is .61.

2.3. Data Collection

The study is targeting 238 first and second graders in four-year-course nursing department located in W City during 5 days from September 16 2015 to September 22 2015. After the researcher revealed own identity and explained purpose and method of the study, the researcher received written consent in their own handwriting not to force for students intending to participate in the study, and then proceeded the study. The researcher made students write a questionnaire outside of a school hour. Writing a questionnaire needed about 15 minutes, and the researcher gave all objects participating in the study the fixed presents as appreciation. Written questionnaires were put in an individual envelope and then this envelope was sealed, so the researcher collected and kept these questionnaires in person not to leak survey contents, and questionnaires will be discarded by pulverizing these questionnaires after 1 year of the study end.

2.4. Analysis

Collected data was analyzed by using SPSS 23.0 Program.
1) General characteristics of objects were analyzed by frequency, percentage, average, and standard deviation.

2) A difference of emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life according to general characteristics of objects was analyzed by independent t-test and ANOVA, and posteriori tests were analyzed by tukey test.

3) Correlation between variables was analyzed by Pearson's correlation coefficient.

4) Factors influencing adjustment to college life of objects were analyzed by multiple regression.

2.5. 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. General Characteristics

General characteristics of objects are that a female student is 89.0%, a first grader is 50.2%, and a second grader is 49.8%. The motives to choose a nursing department are that voluntary motive is 56.8%, so is the highest motive, and next ease of employment is 31.7%. Satisfaction of department is that satisfaction is 55.9%, so is higher than dissatisfaction. The average age is 20.6[Table 1].

3.2. 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 2].

Table 1. General Characteristics (N=227)

Variables	Categories	n (%) or m (SD)
Gender	Male	25 (11.0)
	Female	202 (89.0)
Religion	Yes	86 (37.9)
	No	141 (62.1)
Club	Yes	44 (19.4)
	No	183 (80.6)
Grade	1st	114 (50.2)
	2nd	113 (49.8)
Motivation of admission	Employment guarantee	72 (31.7)
	Recommendation of family and surroundings	24 (10.6)
	Aptitude	129 (56.8)
	Others	2 (0.9)
Satisfaction of school life	Good	127 (55.9)
	Not bad	96 (42.3)
	Bad	4 (1.8)
Academic records (average)	< 3.0	66 (29.1)
	3.0 - 3.5	101 (44.5)
	3.5 - 4.0	46 (20.3)
	≥ 4.0	14 (6.2)
Living	Family	110 (48.5)
	Dormitory	64 (28.2)
	Alone	53 (23.3)
Counseling	None	14 (6.2)
	One	89 (39.2)
	Two	88 (38.8)
	More than three	36 (15.9)
Age (yr)		20.59 (0.96)

Table 2. 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

3.3. Emotional Intelligence, Stress Coping, and Adjustment to College Life according to General Characteristics of Nursing Students

The study analyzed whether there is a meaningful difference of emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life according to general characteristics of nursing students. Emotional intelligence shows a difference according to the motive to choose a nursing department (F=3.72, p=.026) and department satisfaction (F=8.41, p<.001), and stress coping shows a difference according to residential environment (F=3.61, p=0.29). Adjustment to college life shows a difference according to the motive to choose a nursing department (F=4.37, p=.014), department satisfaction (F=6.43, p=.002), school record (F=8.24, p<.001), and counsel with a professor (F=6.24, p<.001) [Table 3].

3.4. 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 4].

3.5. The Effect on Adjustment to College Life of Emotional Intelligence and Stress Coping of Objects

Emotional intelligence (β=.487, p<.001) and stress coping (β=.157, p=.007) of objects are high, they well adjust to college life, and the highest influence factor of them is emotional intelligence. Explanation power of these variables about adjustment to college life is 30.7% (F=49.70, P<.001)[Table 5].

Table 3. Emotional Intelligence, Stress Coping and Adjustment to College Life in Nursing Students according to General Characteristics (N=227)

Variables	Categories	Emotional Intelligence				Stress Coping				Adjustment to College Life			
		M±SD	t/F	p	Post Hoc	M±SD	t/F	p	Post Hoc	M±SD	t/F	p	Post Hoc
Gender	Male	5.07±0.85	1.79	.075		2.10±0.23	-.07	.942		3.37±0.50	1.04	.299	
	Female	4.79±0.71				2.11±0.22				3.26±0.48			
Religion	Yes	4.77±0.73	.83	.407		2.12±0.21	-.94	.349		3.28±0.44	-.16	.870	
	No	4.85±0.73				2.10±0.23				3.27±0.51			
Club	Yes	4.82±0.64	-.04	.967		2.14±0.24	1.09	.278		3.33±0.48	.88	.381	
	No	4.82±0.76				2.10±0.22				3.26±0.48			
Grade	1st	4.74±0.77	-1.67	.096		2.08±0.22	-1.95	.052		3.22±0.49	-1.70	.091	
	2nd	4.90±0.69				2.14±0.23				3.33±0.47			
Motivation of admission	Employment guarantee(a)	4.73±0.70				2.12±0.22				3.21±0.50			
	Recommendation of family and surroundings(b)	4.54±0.71	3.72	.026	c>b	2.04±0.20	1.29	.277		3.07±0.50	4.37	.014	c>b
	Aptitude(c)	4.93±0.74				2.11±0.23				3.35±0.46			
Satisfaction of school life	Good(a)	4.98±0.70				2.12±0.22				3.37±0.45			
	Not bad(b)	4.65±0.72	8.41	<.001	a>b,c	2.10±0.22	.59	.554		3.16±0.49	6.43	.002	a>b
	Bad(c)	4.00±0.61				2.01±0.32				2.88±0.55			
Academic records (average)	< 3.0(a)	4.70±0.70				2.08±0.24				3.05±0.42			
	3.0 - 3.5(b)	4.88±0.73	1.13	.336		2.15±0.22	1.91	.129		3.36±0.47	8.24	<.001	d>a
	3.5 - 4.0(c)	4.80±0.73				2.07±0.20				3.31±0.47			
	≥ 4.0(d)	5.00±0.89				2.08±0.21				3.54±0.53			
Living	Family(a)	4.76±0.69				2.07±0.23				3.21±0.47			
	Dormitory(b)	4.88±0.80	.67	.512		2.13±0.23	3.61	.029	c>a	3.31±0.53	2.24	.108	
	Alone(c)	4.88±0.73				2.16±0.19				3.37±0.41			
Counseling	None(a)	4.50±0.85				2.08±0.19				3.26±0.47			
	One(b)	4.76±0.73	2.41	.068		2.08±0.23	.81	.491		3.13±0.46	6.24	<.001	b<c,d
	Two(c)	4.83±0.72				2.12±0.23				3.32±0.48			
	More than three(d)	5.06±0.71				2.13±0.21				3.51±0.44			

Table 4. Correlations of Emotional Intelligence, Stress Coping and Adjustment to College Life (N=227)

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

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

Table 5. Factors influencing Adjustment to College Life (N=227)

Variables	β	t	p	R^2	F	p
Emotional Intelligence	.487	8.377	<.001	.307	49.70	<.001
Stress Coping	.157	2.704	.007			

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 Shin and Park [8], 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 [15] 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 [17] 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 [18] 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.

Meanwhile, emotional intelligence according to general characteristics shows a meaningful difference in department satisfaction and motive to choose a nursing department. About a difference of emotional intelligence according to the motive to choose a nursing department, own voluntary motive is meaningfully higher than advice of parents and teachers. About a difference of emotional intelligence according to department satisfaction, satisfaction group is meaningfully higher than average group and dissatisfaction group. It conforms to the study results of Shin and Park [8]. Therefore, more active emotional intelligence improvement program should be intervened in students choosing a nursing department by advice rather than own will and having low department satisfaction, by considering that emotional intelligence can be different according to motive to choose a department and satisfaction. In addition, stress coping according to general characteristics showed a meaningful difference in residential environment. About a difference of stress coping according to residential environment, living apart from own family is meaningfully higher than living with own family. This is the result that they cope with several situations they experience, living alone. Adjustment to college life according to general characteristics shows a meaningful difference in motive to choose a nursing department, department satisfaction, school record, and counsel with a professor. About a difference of adjustment to college life according to the motive to choose a nursing department, own voluntary motive is meaningfully higher than advice by parents and teachers. About a difference according to department satisfaction, satisfaction group is meaningfully higher than average group. About a difference according to a school record, a group more than grade point average 4.0 is meaningfully higher than a group under grade point average 3.0. About a difference according to the counsel with a professor, a group whose counsel is twice and a group whose counsel is more than 3 times are meaningfully higher than a group whose counsel is just once.

Therefore, various methods to improve adjustment to college life of nursing students should be prepared by considering the effect on adjustment to college life of motive to choose a department, department satisfaction, school record, and the number of counsels with a professor. In other words, detailed and actual methods should be found like motivation through actual information of a department, raising satisfaction through various activities, introduction of academic ability improvement program, and preparation of close relation by raising the number of counsels with a professor.

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 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. Emotional intelligence was significantly correlation with stress of clinical practice in nursing students. And the higher emotional intelligence was showed the lower stress of clinical practice [9] and clinical practice stress positively correlated with personal distress on empathy [19]. 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 between emotional intelligence and adjustment to college life. The results indicated that emotional intelligence significantly influenced on the adjustment to college life [20].

About the relationship between emotional intelligence and adjustment to college life,

Park, Kim, and Cha [21] supported the result of this study by showing a positive correlation between emotional awareness and adjustment to college life of nursing students. 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 between stress coping and adjustment to college life. A study of Kim [22] targeting nursing students shows that there is a positive correlation 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.

5. Conclusion

This study desires to understand emotional intelligence, stress coping, and adjustment to college life of nursing students, and to establish the relationship between them. As a result of the study, emotional intelligence of nursing students is 4.82 points, stress coping is 2.11 points, and adjustment to college life is 3.27 points, so they are more than the middle. There is a meaningful positive correlation between emotional intelligence and stress coping, emotional intelligence and adjustment to college life, and stress coping and adjustment to college life of nursing students. In addition, if emotional intelligence and stress coping are high, nursing students well adjust to college life, and the highest influence factor of them is emotional intelligence. Explanation power of two variables on adjustment to college life is 30.7%. Based on these results, to improve adjustment to college life of nursing students, it is necessary to develop various programs to raise emotional intelligence, and various programs are needed for nursing students to develop and acquire several strategies to cope with stress.

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