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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence Among Medical Students in Palestine A Cross-Sectional Study.

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Background: Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as a pro-social behavior that deals with recognizing, understanding, influencing and managing our own and other's emotions. In medical education and clinical practice, EI has been related to improves the doctor-patient relationship.

Objectives: Measure EI among Palestinian medical students in two stages of their studies, clinical and basic sciences, and assessing the factors that may affect it. Moreover, compare medical students of Al-Quds and Al-Najah Universities regarding EI score and detect possible differences.

Methods: A quantitative, cross-sectional, questionnaire-based, online survey was conducted among 692 medical students in Al-Quds and Al-Najah universities in Palestine. Emotional intelligence was evaluated using a 33-item scale as an index introduced by Schutte et al. (1998). Data was analyzed in a quantitative manner using SPSS (VER.20).

Results: 745 students filled the questionnaire with a response rate of 92.88%. A total of 692 were sampled which were representative of the student population. The mean score of EI is 3.83
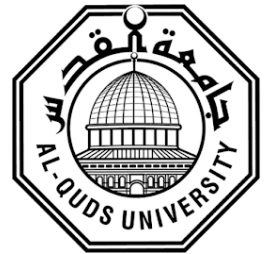
(SD=0.41) out of a maximum possible score of 5 with 69.1% of the sample having high EI. Statistics showed that EI decreased significantly at α≤0.05 among basic and clinical stages of study with a negative correlation between EI and academic year (PCC= -0.086). This indicates that as the academic year increases, EI decreases (p=0.023). Moreover, EI is affected significantly at α≤0.05 in a positive manner by having a hobby or doing extracurricular activities. In addition, students who indicate they always regret studying medicine tend to relate to lower EI, this may reflect the lack of interest to study this field.

Conclusion: Medical students, both male and female, have a relatively high level of emotional intelligence in the universities that were studied. Students in the clinical stage have lower EI than basic sciences medical students, which indicates that students have a conflict between objectivity and humanity while training clinically. Therefore, emotional support during clinical years would serve in improving EI. Moreover, EI is affected by having a hobby or extracurricular activities, indicating that EI can be modulated through the encouragement of such activities.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence (EI), Doctor-patient relationship, Medical students, basicsciences, clinical.