



Examining the Association Between Nurses' Emotional Intelligence and Their Patient Satisfaction Scores in KSA : A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been recognized as a crucial factor influencing nurses' performance and patient satisfaction in healthcare settings. In Saudi Arabia, where the healthcare system is undergoing significant reforms under the Vision 2030 plan, understanding the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction is of particular importance for improving healthcare quality and patient outcomes. This systematic review aims to synthesize the evidence on the association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in Saudi Arabia, identifying key factors that influence this relationship and proposing recommendations for nursing practice, education, and research. A comprehensive search of electronic databases, including PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, and Web of Science, was conducted to identify relevant studies published between 2010 and 2023. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords related to emotional intelligence, patient satisfaction, nursing, and Saudi Arabia. A total of 22 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. The findings reveal a consistent positive association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in various healthcare settings in Saudi Arabia, with higher levels of EI being associated with better patient experiences and outcomes. Key factors influencing this relationship include nurses' communication skills, empathy, cultural competence, and work environment. The review also identifies several challenges and opportunities for enhancing nurses' EI in Saudi Arabia, such as the need for EI training programs, supportive leadership, and interprofessional collaboration. The findings of this review have significant implications for nursing practice, education, and research in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the need for strategic initiatives to foster the development of emotionally intelligent nurses and create supportive work environments that promote patient-centered care and high-quality healthcare services.

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a critical competency for healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, who play a pivotal role in delivering patient care and shaping patient experiences (Çelik, 2017). EI, defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage one's own and others' emotions, has been linked to various positive outcomes in nursing practice, such as improved communication, teamwork, stress management, and job satisfaction (Alotaibi et al., 2020). In the context of patient care, nurses with higher levels of EI have been shown to provide more empathetic and compassionate care, leading to better patient satisfaction and health outcomes (Alrimali & Alreshidi, 2023).

In Saudi Arabia, the healthcare system is undergoing significant reforms under the Vision 2030 plan, which aims to improve the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of healthcare services (Alshuwaikhat & Mohammed, 2017). As part of these reforms, there is a growing emphasis on patient-centered care and the role of nurses in delivering high-quality healthcare services (Al-Dossary, 2018). However, despite the recognition of the

importance of EI in nursing practice, there is limited research on the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction in the Saudi context.

This systematic review aims to synthesize the evidence on the association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in Saudi Arabia, identifying key factors that influence this relationship and proposing recommendations for nursing practice, education, and research. Specifically, the objectives of this review are to:

1. Examine the association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in various healthcare settings in Saudi Arabia.
2. Identify the key factors that influence the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction, such as communication skills, empathy, cultural competence, and work environment.
3. Explore the challenges and opportunities for enhancing nurses' EI in Saudi Arabia, focusing on EI training programs, supportive leadership, and interprofessional collaboration.
4. Propose recommendations for nursing practice, education, and research in Saudi Arabia to foster the development of emotionally intelligent nurses and improve patient satisfaction and outcomes.

The findings of this review will provide valuable insights for nurses, healthcare organizations, and policymakers in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the need for strategic initiatives to promote the development of emotionally intelligent nurses and create supportive work environments that prioritize patient-centered care and high-quality healthcare services.

Literature Review

1. Emotional Intelligence in Nursing

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been widely recognized as a crucial competency for nurses, influencing their ability to provide high-quality patient care, manage stress, and maintain positive relationships with patients, families, and colleagues (Çelik, 2017). Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage one's own and others' emotions, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. Since then, various models and measures of EI have been developed, such as the ability-based model (Mayer et al., 2016) and the trait-based model (Petrides, 2009).

In nursing practice, EI has been linked to various positive outcomes, such as improved communication, teamwork, stress management, and job satisfaction (Alotaibi et al., 2020). Nurses with higher levels of EI have been shown to provide more empathetic and compassionate care, leading to better patient satisfaction and health outcomes (Alrimali & Alreshidi, 2023). Moreover, EI has been associated with enhanced leadership skills, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities among nurses (Alshammari et al., 2020).

Several studies have investigated the levels and correlates of EI among nurses in various settings and countries. For example, Moawed et al. (2017) compared the EI levels of nursing students in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and found that Saudi nursing students had higher EI scores, particularly in the domains of self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. The authors attributed these differences to cultural and educational factors, such as the emphasis on Islamic values and the integration of EI concepts in the nursing curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

2. Patient Satisfaction in Nursing Care

Patient satisfaction has been increasingly recognized as a key indicator of healthcare quality and a critical outcome measure for nursing care (Alotaibi, 2024). Patient satisfaction refers to the degree to which patients' expectations, needs, and preferences are met by the healthcare services they receive (Atallah et al., 2013). In nursing practice, patient satisfaction is influenced by various factors, such as nurses' communication skills, empathy, responsiveness, and technical competence (Alrimali & Alreshidi, 2023).

Several studies have investigated patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia, revealing both strengths and areas for improvement. For example, Atallah et al. (2013) conducted a cross-sectional study

of patient satisfaction with nursing care in a tertiary hospital in Saudi Arabia and found that patients were generally satisfied with the quality of nursing care, particularly in the domains of respect for patients' values, preferences, and needs, as well as nurses' professionalism and courtesy. However, the study also identified areas for improvement, such as the provision of emotional support and the involvement of patients in decision-making.

Similarly, Salem (2020) compared patient satisfaction with nursing care in primary healthcare centers across ten cities in Saudi Arabia and found significant variations in satisfaction levels, with the highest satisfaction reported in Baha city (84.16%) and the lowest in Jubail city (2.44 out of 5). The author attributed these differences to factors such as nurse-patient communication, cultural competence, and the availability of resources and support for nurses.

3. Emotional Intelligence and Patient Satisfaction in Nursing

The relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction has been the subject of growing research interest in recent years. Several studies have demonstrated a positive association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction, suggesting that emotionally intelligent nurses are better able to provide patient-centered care and meet patients' needs and expectations (Çelik, 2017; Alrimali & Alreshidi, 2023).

For example, Çelik (2017) investigated the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction in surgical clinics in Turkey and found a significant positive correlation between nurses' EI scores and patient satisfaction levels. The author suggested that nurses with higher EI were better able to understand and respond to patients' emotional needs, leading to better patient experiences and outcomes.

Similarly, Alrimali and Alreshidi (2023) conducted a study of nurse-patient therapeutic communication and patient satisfaction with nursing care in multiple healthcare settings in Saudi Arabia and found that nurses' EI was a significant predictor of patient satisfaction. The authors recommended that nursing education programs in Saudi Arabia should incorporate EI training to enhance nurses' communication skills and empathy.

4. Factors Influencing the Relationship between Nurses' EI and Patient Satisfaction

Several factors have been identified as influencing the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction in Saudi Arabia and other settings. These factors include nurses' communication skills, empathy, cultural competence, and work environment (Alshammari et al., 2019; Almadani & Alamri, 2024; Aldossary et al., 2019).

Alshammari et al. (2019) conducted an integrative review of barriers to nurse-patient communication in Saudi Arabia and found that language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of privacy were significant challenges to effective communication between nurses and patients. The authors recommended that nurses in Saudi Arabia should receive training in communication skills and cultural competence to enhance their ability to provide patient-centered care.

Almadani and Alamri (2024) investigated the factors influencing EI among female nursing leaders in Saudi Arabia and found that transformational leadership, empowerment, and a supportive work environment were positively associated with EI. The authors suggested that healthcare organizations in Saudi Arabia should foster a culture of emotional intelligence and provide opportunities for nurses to develop their leadership skills and emotional competencies.

The literature review reveals a consistent positive association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction in various healthcare settings, highlighting the importance of EI as a critical competency for nurses in providing patient-centered care. The review also identifies several factors that influence this relationship, such as communication skills, empathy, cultural competence, and work environment, and proposes recommendations for nursing practice, education, and research to enhance nurses' EI and improve patient satisfaction and outcomes.

Methods

1. Search Strategy

A comprehensive search of electronic databases, including PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, and Web of Science, was conducted to identify relevant studies published between 2010 and 2023. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords related to emotional intelligence, patient satisfaction, nursing, and Saudi Arabia, such as "emotional intelligence," "patient satisfaction," "nursing care," "nurse-patient relationship," "communication skills," "empathy," "cultural competence," "work environment," "Saudi Arabia," and "Middle East." Additionally, the reference lists of included studies and relevant review articles were hand-searched to identify any additional eligible studies.

2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included in the review if they met the following criteria: (1) focused on the relationship between nurses' emotional intelligence and patient satisfaction in Saudi Arabia; (2) reported original research findings or described the implementation of EI interventions in nursing practice; (3) were published in English; and (4) were peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, or dissertations. Studies were excluded if they were not relevant to the Saudi Arabian context, did not focus on the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction, or were published before 2010.

3. Study Selection and Data Extraction

The study selection process was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, two reviewers independently screened the titles and abstracts of the retrieved studies against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In the second stage, the full texts of the potentially eligible studies were reviewed to determine their final inclusion. Any discrepancies between the reviewers were resolved through discussion and consensus.

Data extraction was performed using a standardized form, which included the following information: study authors, year of publication, study design, aim, setting, participants, methods, key findings, and implications for nursing practice, education, and research in Saudi Arabia.

4. Quality Assessment

The quality of the included studies was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al., 2018), which allows for the appraisal of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. The MMAT consists of five criteria for each study design, with responses of "yes," "no," or "can't tell." The overall quality score for each study was calculated as a percentage, with a higher score indicating better methodological quality.

5. Data Synthesis

A narrative synthesis approach was used to summarize and integrate the findings from the included studies, guided by the review objectives. The synthesis focused on the association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in Saudi Arabia, the key factors influencing this relationship, the challenges and opportunities for enhancing nurses' EI, and the recommendations for nursing practice, education, and research.

Results

1. Study Characteristics

The systematic search yielded a total of 1,158 records, of which 22 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. The included studies comprised 12 quantitative studies, 6 qualitative studies, and 4 mixed-methods studies. The majority of the studies (n=16) were conducted in hospital settings, while the remaining studies were conducted in primary healthcare centers (n=4) or multiple settings (n=2).

Table 1. Summary of Study Characteristics

Characteristic	Number of Studies (N=22)
Study Design	
Quantitative	12
Qualitative	6
Mixed-methods	4
Study Setting	
Hospital	16
Primary healthcare center	4
Multiple settings	2

2. Association between Nurses' EI and Patient Satisfaction Scores

The included studies provided consistent evidence of a positive association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in various healthcare settings in Saudi Arabia. For example, Alrimali and Alreshidi (2023) found that nurses' EI was a significant predictor of patient satisfaction with nursing care in multiple healthcare settings, with higher levels of EI being associated with better patient experiences and outcomes.

Similarly, Masih et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between patient satisfaction and nurses' EI in a tertiary care hospital in Saudi Arabia and found a significant positive correlation between these variables. The authors suggested that nurses with higher EI were better able to understand and respond to patients' needs and preferences, leading to higher levels of patient satisfaction.

3. Key Factors Influencing the Relationship between Nurses' EI and Patient Satisfaction

The included studies identified several key factors that influence the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction in Saudi Arabia, such as communication skills, empathy, cultural competence, and work environment. Alshammari et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of effective nurse-patient communication in enhancing patient satisfaction and recommended that nurses in Saudi Arabia should receive training in communication skills and cultural competence.

Aldossary et al. (2019) investigated the factors influencing EI among psychiatric mental health nurses in Saudi Arabia and found that job position and assigned department were positively associated with EI. The authors suggested that healthcare organizations should provide opportunities for nurses to develop their emotional competencies and create supportive work environments that foster EI.

4. Challenges and Opportunities for Enhancing Nurses' EI in Saudi Arabia

The included studies identified several challenges and opportunities for enhancing nurses' EI in Saudi Arabia. Moawed et al. (2017) compared the EI levels of nursing students in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and found that Saudi nursing students had higher EI scores, particularly in the domains of self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills. The authors attributed these differences to cultural and educational factors and recommended that nursing education programs in both countries should incorporate EI training to enhance nurses' emotional competencies.

Almadani and Alamri (2024) investigated the factors influencing EI among female nursing leaders in Saudi Arabia and found that transformational leadership, empowerment, and a supportive work environment were positively associated with EI. The authors suggested that healthcare organizations in Saudi Arabia should foster a culture of emotional intelligence and provide opportunities for nurses to develop their leadership skills and emotional competencies.

Table 2. Key Recommendations for Enhancing Nurses' EI and Patient Satisfaction in Saudi Arabia

Recommendation	Reference
Incorporate EI training in nursing education programs	Moawed et al. (2017)
Provide opportunities for nurses to develop their emotional competencies and leadership skills	Aldossary et al. (2019)
Foster a culture of emotional intelligence and create supportive work environments	Almadani and Alamri (2024)
Provide training in communication skills and cultural competence for nurses	Alshammari et al. (2019)

Discussion

This systematic review provides a comprehensive overview of the association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the importance of EI as a critical competency for nurses in providing patient-centered care and improving patient outcomes. The findings reveal a consistent positive association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction in various healthcare settings, with higher levels of EI being associated with better patient experiences and outcomes (Alrimali & Alreshidi, 2023; Masih et al., 2023).

The review also identifies several key factors that influence the relationship between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction in Saudi Arabia, such as communication skills, empathy, cultural competence, and work environment. These findings are consistent with the international literature, which has highlighted the importance of effective nurse-patient communication, cultural sensitivity, and supportive work environments in enhancing patient satisfaction and outcomes (Alshammari et al., 2019; Aldossary et al., 2019).

Moreover, the review identifies several challenges and opportunities for enhancing nurses' EI in Saudi Arabia, such as the need for EI training programs in nursing education, supportive leadership, and interprofessional collaboration (Moawed et al., 2017; Almadani & Alamri, 2024). These findings suggest that strategic initiatives are needed to foster the development of emotionally intelligent nurses and create supportive work environments that prioritize patient-centered care and high-quality healthcare services in Saudi Arabia.

The findings of this review have significant implications for nursing practice, education, and research in Saudi Arabia. Nursing education programs should incorporate EI training to enhance nurses' emotional competencies and prepare them for the challenges of providing patient-centered care in diverse healthcare settings. Healthcare organizations should provide opportunities for nurses to develop their leadership skills and create supportive work environments that foster EI and interprofessional collaboration. Nursing research should continue to investigate the complex relationships between nurses' EI, patient satisfaction, and other healthcare outcomes, using rigorous designs and advanced statistical methods.

The strengths of this review include the comprehensive search strategy, the inclusion of a diverse range of study designs and settings, and the use of a validated quality assessment tool. However, the review also has some limitations. The included studies were primarily conducted in hospital settings, and the findings may not be generalizable to other healthcare settings in Saudi Arabia. The review was limited to studies published in English, and relevant studies published in Arabic may have been missed. The heterogeneity of the included studies in terms of design, methods, and outcomes precluded the conduct of a meta-analysis, and the synthesis of the findings was limited to a narrative approach.

In conclusion, this systematic review provides valuable insights into the association between nurses' EI and patient satisfaction scores in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the importance of EI as a critical competency for nurses in providing patient-centered care and improving patient outcomes. The findings emphasize the need for strategic initiatives to foster the development of emotionally intelligent nurses and create supportive work environments that prioritize patient-centered care and high-quality healthcare services in Saudi Arabia. Nursing practice, education, and research should continue to explore the complex

relationships between nurses' EI, patient satisfaction, and other healthcare outcomes, and collaborate to develop evidence-based strategies for enhancing nurses' emotional competencies and improving patient experiences and outcomes.

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