



Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Employee Caring Behaviour: a Study of Professional Nurses in Tertiary Health Care Institutions in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined the effect of emotional intelligence on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically the study sought to examine the effects of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State. Anchored on Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring, the study adopted the survey design. Population of the study consisted of 586 professional nurses working in the two tertiary healthcare facilities in Benue State (312 from the Federal Medical Centre and 274 from the Benue State University Teaching Hospital). A sample size of 245 was arrived at with the aid of Taro Yamene's sampling formula. Primary data were gathered through questionnaire. The data were coded and analysed with the aid of SPSS. Hypotheses of the study were tested using regression analysis at 5% level of significance. Findings revealed that self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management all have significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State, Nigeria. The study concludes that there is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institution in Benue State. The study recommends that in order to ensure quality care to patients, management of tertiary healthcare organisations in Benue State should recognize and develop EI abilities in nurses who constantly struggle to show care since EI can be taught and learnt.*

Keywords: *Self Awareness, Self-Management, Caring Behaviour.*



1. INTRODUCTION

Within healthcare institutions, nurses are trained to respond to all of the patients' needs. In that regard, it is imperative that they possess high levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) that will facilitate their ability to engage in important connections that assist quality care provision (Beckham, 2017). Nurses who score high in EI abilities exhibit a keen awareness of their own emotions and it facilitates the ability to exhibit quality caring behaviour towards patients even when going through the emotional pressure created by the healthcare work environment (Kozub, Brown & Ecoff, 2016). Therefore, developing EI competencies can assist the nurse with the capability to deal with workplace pressures (Yoo & Park, 2015) while fulfilling their top priority to clients which is showing effective care which communicates respect and human kindness to patients.

There is a likelihood that increased sense of choice in thoughts, feelings, and actions can be superior in nurses bearing self-awareness. When this is obtainable, the skills to communicate could be improved, the ability to make decisions will receive precision and resilience could be collectively promoted among nurses (Adair & Franklin, 2014). Every apprehension thrown on the nursing profession by participants in the industry would be better understood and dealt with by nurses who score high in EI (Kibret, Tadesse, Debella, Degefa & Regassa, 2022). If truly EI is taught and learned as being promoted, then acquiring EI abilities by nurses may assist to sustain their ability to show quality caring behaviours (Khamisa, Peltzer, Ilic & Oldenburg, 2016).

There are theoretical evidences that to care for others, one needs to understand self and others and be able to create good relations with that understanding. And that proves the importance of EI in healthcare facilities. That is to say if professionals in the healthcare industry exhibit high levels of EI, the tendency of them showing care to patients will not be a mere contemplation but reality (Johnson, 2017). With this understanding there human resource experts have began placing emphasis on EI levels of applicants whenever the need to recruit for caring professions arises (Harper & Jones-Schenk, 2012; Lyon et al., 2013). However, there is a debate that the relevance of EI on caring behaviour may be lower than thought of since there are limited empirical researches proving the link between EI and caring behaviours in spite of the theoretical validation of its importance (Kaur *et al.*, 2013; Rego *et al.*, 2010). A side from this, here in Nigerian healthcare industry, there is rarity of works investigating the effect of EI on caring behaviour. Thus, the current study examines the effect of Emotional Intelligence on caring behaviour of professional nurses working in the tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.

The Study Objectives

In a broad sense, the objective of this study is to examine emotional intelligence and caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State with the intentions test if EI can predict caring behaviour. Specifying these objectives this study will:

- i. examine the effect of self-awareness on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.



- ii. examine the effect of self-management on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.
- iii. examine the effect of social awareness on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.
- iv. examine the effect of relationship management on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.

Theoretical Review and Conceptual Framework

Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring

Watson's Theory of human caring guided the appreciation of professional nurses' EI. The rationale behind this is that humans are not objects and should not be treated as such (Watson, 2012). The theory holds that compassionate care calls for the nurse to be responsive, mindful and purposeful (Summerell, 2015). A caring mindset grounded in emotional connection and compassion is what the nurse needs to achieve this (Clark, 2016). And this is where this study can be linked to this theory; i.e. professional nurses can utilize the EI abilities to provide optimal care.

Emotional Intelligence

EI is a combination of abilities regarding identification and control of one's own emotions and others, and to apply same to channel one's thoughts and manners to build successful interactions (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). The skill to make use of emotions, in order to make easy a variety of cognitive actions, such as thoughts, averting problems, self-management and understanding complex interactions amid co-workers is the highpoint of EI. EI is the gift to work on opinions and feelings so as to successfully put up meaningful, courteous associations and make most advantageous decisions. While interacting with others in environment of work, there are four notable dimensions by which EI could be approached. These include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (Goleman, 1995 as cited in Ashworth, 2013). Self-awareness refers to ability to appreciate both the inner and external self and the capacity to persistently appraise the results of this self on people close to us (Danguah, 2014). When Self-management is in reference, we are referring to the aptitude to control our inner self in the most effective way possible to help portray only the superlative feelings and at the same time try to subvert our emotions that have the potential to impede job performance and interpersonal relationships (Karimi, 2014). Social awareness is the capacity to comprehend and react to the necessities of others (Ashworth, 2013). The capabilities related with social awareness include empathy which means understanding the individual's feelings, needs and concerns. Relationship management construct consists of a set of abilities including basic and essential social skills of analyzing and manipulating the emotions and actions of others and also working out pleasing reactions from them (Sambu, 2019).

Caring Behaviour

Caring is the principled ideology of nursing that results in safeguarding, improvement, and perpetuation of human dignity (Gadow, 1984). Behaviors associated with caring are the like of touching, listening, accepting differing beliefs and cultures, connecting and forming



relationships, expressing empathy and effective communication. Another dimension of caring behavior is the ability to create a feeling safety when in the midst of patients. The 10 carative factors earlier propounded by Watson were later consolidated into five dimensions of nurse caring. These comprise assurance of human presence, reverential deference, expert knowledge and skilfulness, optimistic connections and attention to other's experiences. These human-to-human contacts are commonly carried out effortlessly out in the healthcare environments where patients are the object of care. Caring is central to the nurse-patient routing and generates healing results in the person being cared for (Oluma & Abadiga, 2020).

Emotional Intelligence and Caring Behaviour

The results of integrative review by Nightingalea, et al (2018) indicated that the self-awareness and self-regulation of nurses were related to both physical and emotional caring. Moreover, Adams and Iseler (2014) carried out a cross-sectional survey on 361 registered nurses in USA to explore nurses' EI and quality of care and found that EI is related to quality of care. Araque (2015) also carried out a cross-sectional study on 31 registered nurses in USA to explore whether nurses' EI competences such as empathy and relationship management are related to patient satisfaction with care and found a positive relationship. Kaur *et al.* (2013) study on 448 nurses working in Malaysia showed that managing own emotions was related to greater caring behaviours. The study by Lorber, (2015) on 413 nurses and 96 nurse leaders working in Slovenia found that social awareness was related to quality of care. Weng, *et al.* (2011) examined 50 Surgeons in Taiwan and found that EI had positive relationship with patient satisfaction with care.

Thus, this study put forward the following null hypotheses:

Ho₁: Self-awareness has no significant effect on caring behaviour ensure quality care to patients;

Ho₂: Self-management has no significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.;

Ho₃: Social awareness has no significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.;

Ho₄: Relationship management has no significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study on the effect of EI on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary healthcare institutions in Benue state adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 586 professional nurses working in the two tertiary healthcare facilities in Benue State (274 from the Federal Medical Centre and 312 from the Benue State University Teaching Hospital located in Makurdi, Benue State). Most of the nurses hold a 3-year nursing diploma or a bachelor's degree in nursing and related fields and others have postgraduate qualifications in health related studies. Using Taro Yamene's sampling formula, 238 nurses were sampled from the two tertiary health institutions. To collect data for this study, questionnaire was the main tool. The study adopted the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) by Wolff (2005) as the instrument for measuring EI. The ECI measures 18



competencies organized into four clusters: 3, 6, 3 and 5 items are used to elucidate information on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management respectively. The adoption of this instrument is not unconnected to the fact that it is significantly harmonious with the dimensions of EI adopted in this study. Caring behaviour variable was measured using 10 items adapted from Carolie Coates Caring Efficacy Scale (CCCES) as used by Johnson (2017). A pilot study was done on 82 final year nursing students who were on internship training in the studied health facilities. The nursing students were asked to participate voluntarily. The Cronbach's Alpha Reliability for the 18 scales ESCI inventory and the 10 scales CCCES ranged from 0.74 to 0.87 which proofed the usefulness of the instruments in the study (Hay Group, 2017). A buffer margin of 10 % was added to the sample size therefore, 262 questionnaires were issued out, enabling us to retrieve 245 validly answered questionnaires. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the effect of the four EI constructs on caring behaviour among professional nurses in the tertiary health sector institutions in Benue Sate, Nigeria.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3.1: Regression Result

Model		R	R ²	R ² Adjusted	Beta	T	Sig.
		.606a	.367	.343			
1	(Constant)					1.324	.018
	Self-Awareness				.217	2.722	.008
	Self-Management				.493	6.402	.000
	Social-Awareness				.209	2.635	.010
Relationship Management					.171	2.216	.029

Source: SPSS Output, 2023.

The presentation in Table 1 revealed that up to 36.7 % of the variation in caring behaviour is significantly determined by self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management ($R^2 = .367$). That is to say there are other factors not captured in the model that are responsible for the remaining 63.3 % variation in caring behaviour. It is also evident that at 95 % confidence level, these variables gave rise to statistically significant figures (high t-values, $p < 0.05$). The output detailed positive figures for all the variables being studied which makes it safe to say that their effects on caring behaviour are all positive.

Results of Hypotheses Testing and Discussion of Findings

Employing regression analysis, below is the discussion of the results from the testing of the four hypotheses in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

H0₁: Self-awareness has no significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State. The result of the multiple regression analysis in Table 1 indicated that there is a significant effect of self-awareness on caring behaviour ($\beta = 0.217$, $t = 2.722$, $P = 0.0008$). With this result, we reject the null hypothesis ($H0_1$) and



conclude that self-awareness has significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State. This finding corroborates Nightingalea, et al (2018) who revealed that self-awareness is related both to physical and emotional caring.

H0₂: Self-management has no significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State As can be seen in Table 1, caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State is significantly predicted by self-management ($\beta = 0.493$, $t = 6.402$, $P = 0.000$). The P-value is less than 0.05 so the researchers reject the null hypothesis (H0₂) and reach a conclusion that self-management has a significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State. This result supports that of Kaur et al. (2015) who found a significant relationship between ones ability to manage hiss own emotions greater caring behaviours.

H0₃: Social awareness has no significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State The result from Table 1 also revealed that social awareness is a significant predictor of caring behaviour ($\beta = 0.209$, $t = 2.635$, $P = 0.010$). The null hypothesis (H0₃) is rejected because P – value is less than 0.05 level of significance and we therefore conclude that social awareness significantly affects caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State. The findings of this study agrees with Lorber, (2015) who studied 413 nurses and 96 nurse leaders working in Slovenia and found that social awareness was related to quality of care.

H0₄: Relationship management has no significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State Table 1 again showed that relationship managements is a significant predictor of caring behaviour ($\beta = 0.171$, $t = 2.216$, $P = 0.029$). This provides substantial evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H0₄) and conclude that relationship management significantly affects caring behaviour of professional nurses in tertiary health care institutions in Benue State. This outcome is same with that of Araque (2015) who found that relationship management is related to patients' satisfaction with care.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings from the analysis of data collected in this study lead to the following major conclusions:

The study concludes that self-awareness significantly affects caring behaviour of professional nurses in public health sector organisations in Benue State. That is to say nurses who score high on self-awareness have the potential to exhibit higher caring behaviour than those who do not. Also, the study concludes that self-management has significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in public health sector organisations in Benue State. By this it means the ability and skill of nurses to manage their disruptive moods have the capacity to affect caring behaviour in a positive manner. The study again concludes that social awareness has significant effect on caring behaviour of professional nurses in public health sector organisations in Benue State. This can be explained to imply that nurses with very high social connections among the patients are likely to show greater care compared to the very quiet and the so called anti-social ones. And finally, the study concludes that there is significant effect



of relationship management on caring behaviour of professional nurses in public health sector organisations in Benue State. This is to say that nurses who are skilled in relationship management can easily make friends with patients which is likely to affect their caring behaviour in a positive manner. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend that in order to ensure quality care to patients, management of tertiary healthcare organisations in Benue State should recognize and develop EI abilities in nurses who constantly struggle to show care since EI can be taught and learnt.

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