

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE LEVEL OF YEAR ONE AND TWO MEDICAL STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA SARAWAK: ASSOCIATION WITH DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Accepted 28 February 2018, Published online 31 March 2018

### ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them, and to guide one's thinking and actions. It is very important to assess as it helps to reason out our emotional responses. The objective of this study is to assess the emotional intelligence level of Year one and two medical students of UNIMAS. Majority has strength in all the domains except managing emotions domain where 51.5% need attention. No respondent fall into the development priority competency. There were no significant difference among all the domains between two groups but Year 1 students need more attention in managing emotions domain compared to Year 2 students. There was no significant association between demographic characteristics – age, residency, qualification and ethnicity – but there was a significant association (p value of 0.038) in male with empathy domain. Further study should be done on groups spanning from Year 1 to Year 5 as they have a greater difference in age as well as exposure to clinical practice which may have a significant impact on their emotional intelligence.

**Key words:** Emotional intelligence, strength, domains

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### INTRODUCTION

Emotion is the foundation to being a human who has the capacity to experience emotions – affection, happiness, anger, sadness and guilt. It enables human interaction to be meaningful and effective and directly or indirectly affects the human life. When one fails to control his emotions, it can be cancerous in the sense that there will be over-reaction towards and over-expression of feelings and those are not necessarily beneficial for human. This is where emotional intelligence (EI) matters. In the healthcare field, EI is a critical building block of success for healthcare leaders (Fernandez *et al.*, 2012). Usually, the healthcare leaders will only obtain hard skills during their studies in medical school. They give very less attention towards soft skills during their training (Porath & Pearson, 2009). However, soft skills are vital for the success of healthcare providers as it involves the excellence in interpersonal and communication skills and

professionalism (Madden, 2014). Birks & Watt (2007) reported that there were a lot of patients complained about doctors with poor communication, not competent in clinical skills, and improving communication in health care is the current area of interest in medical policy and practice. Furthermore, academic performance is thought to have relations with EI, either directly or indirectly. Shipley *et al.* (2010) stated that EI was related to academic performance for two reasons. Firstly, academic performance involves a great deal of ambiguity. Secondly, the majority of academic work is self-directed requiring high levels of self-management. As medical students aspiring to be doctors, a good level of EI is essential in preparation for their clinical years and ultimately, when they become general practitioners in the future. According to a research by Birks and Watt (2007), it was suggested that EI is important for effective practice, particularly with respect to delivering patient-centered care. With EI, they will be able to handle stress during their course of study and they will also be able to communicate better when they

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