

# Nurses' Professional Quality of Life

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## ABSTRACT

**Background/Objectives:** This study is a descriptive research study to identify factors affecting quality of professional lives of nurses.

**Method/Statistical Analysis:** The subjects of this study were 177 nurses working in a general hospital in Korea, and the data collection was from February 01, 2018 to February 26, 2018. The collected data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis.

**Findings:** As a result of the study, Quality of professional lives of nurses and Emotional labor( $r=-.114$ ,  $p=.016$ ) showed negative correlation, and Emotional intelligence( $r=.274$ ,  $p=.000$ ) showed significant positive correlation. Among emotional intelligence, self emotional appraisal( $\beta=-.043$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and the use of emotion( $\beta=-.394$ ,  $p=.007$ ) were found to affect the quality of professional lives of nurses.

**Improvements/Applications:** In conclusion, strategies for minimizing emotional labor and improving emotional intelligence are needed to improve the quality of professional life.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Labor, Emotional Intelligence, Nurses, Professional, Quality of life*

## Introduction

Han et al. <sup>1</sup> studied and published about emotional labor occupational groups for a total of 5,667 workers in 203 Korean occupations. Of the 30 high emotional labor groups, nurses were included and nurses experienced a high average emotional labor of 4.33 points. Among the medical care workers, nurses are experiencing the highest emotional labor after emergency medical staff <sup>[1]</sup>, and emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and professional quality of life for nurses performing nursing at the forefront for the health of the subject need to be recognized.

Emotional labor refers to labor involving the suppression and control of emotions to express emotional expressions such as speech, facial expressions, and gestures as part of the job<sup>2</sup>. Currently, workers' suicide

and high suicide accidents and stress caused by heavy and continuous emotional labor are becoming a big social problem. Recently, in Korea, an amendment to the Industrial Safety and Health Act called 'Emotional Laborer Protection Act' has been implemented in October 2018<sup>3</sup> and legal protection against emotional laborers has been started. As the industry becomes more sophisticated and service workers are increasing, their access to emotional labor for mental and physical health is an important issue, and it is also important that they have an interest in their quality of life. Recently, emotional labor was recognized as a specific labor and it was recognized for its importance however, nursing of patients is recognized simply as a duty of a nurse, such as professional consciousness or service spirit, and the understanding of emotional labor that is experienced during provision of nursing is still lacking.

Since the emotional labor of a nurse can not be omitted during the performance of a job, the emotional labor of the nurse must be actively managed<sup>4</sup>. In many previous studies, emotional labor affected Exhaustion<sup>4,5,6</sup>, Increased job stress<sup>7</sup>, Turnover intention<sup>6</sup>, and Job commitment<sup>8</sup> of nurses and was reported to reduce the quality of nursing and the quality of professional life<sup>9</sup>.

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Emotional intelligence is an emotional tendency that is mentioned as a countermeasure against stress that has harmful effects on an individual or organization<sup>10</sup>, and it refers to the ability to recognize the emotions of oneself and others, synchronize oneself, and manage emotions well<sup>11</sup>. In the nursing field, various stresses occur, but the nurses with high emotional intelligence think positively and rationally to resolve the conflict effectively, to control emotional labor<sup>12</sup> by controlling emotions, and are highly engaged<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, nurses who provide physical and mental care for all age groups need emotional intelligence to be able to cope effectively with their work<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the research that confirms the emotional intelligence affecting the professional lives of nurses will be meaningful.

Nurses who are experiencing psychological stress and stress frequently are exposed to emotional labor, which can negatively affect the quality of professional life. Emotional labor has been reported to cause Exhaustion<sup>5</sup> and to affect the quality of professional life<sup>9</sup>. Professional quality of life has been studied and applied to professionals in many industries<sup>15,16</sup>, and in Korea, the quality of professional life is being studied in nurses such as emergency room nurse<sup>17</sup>, oncology nurse<sup>18</sup>, mental nurse<sup>19</sup>, community health practitioners<sup>20</sup>. It is necessary to apply the concept of quality of professional life to understand how nurses nursing patients in various fields evaluate themselves and their work, and it is necessary to examine how emotional labor and emotional intelligence affect the quality of professional life.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of emotional labor and emotional intelligence on the quality of professional life for nurses. In addition, it was attempted to provide basic data for enhancing the understanding of nurses, alleviating the emotional labor of nurses, and establishing plans for adjusting and utilizing emotions.

## Materials and Method

**Design:** This study is a descriptive study to investigate the effect of emotional labor and emotional intelligence of nurses on quality of professional life.

**Subjects:** The subjects of this study were 177 nurses working in a general hospital in Korea. The questionnaire was given to 200 subjects considering dropout rate, and of the collected questionnaires, 177 were used as the final analysis data, excluding 23 missing many responses.

## Tool

**Emotional Labor:** The emotional labor measurement tool was based on the work of Morris and Feldman<sup>21</sup> developed by Kim<sup>22</sup>. This tool has 9 total items including 3 items of Frequency of emotional display, 3 items of Attentiveness to required display rules, and 3 items Emotional dissonance. Each item was answered with Likert 5 point scale, and higher score represents higher emotional labor. In Kim's (1998) study, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .86, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .89 in this study.

**Emotional Intelligence:** The emotional intelligence scale used was the WLEIS (Wong & Law Emotional Intelligence Scale) tool developed by Wong & Law<sup>23</sup>. This tool consists of a total of 16 items including 4 items of self emotional appraisal, 4 items of others emotional appraisal, 4 items of use of emotion, 4 items of regulation of emotion. Each item is measured on a 5-point Likert scale, and higher score represents higher emotional intelligence. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .87 at the time of tool development, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .94 in this study.

**Quality of Professional Life:** For Quality of professional life, Compassion satisfaction/Fatigue self test for Helpers developed by Figley<sup>24</sup> revised by Stamm<sup>25</sup> to ProQOL Version 5 was used. This instrument consists of empathy satisfaction and empathy fatigue, and empathy fatigue consists of exhaustion and secondary traumatic stress. It is measured in a 5 point Likert scale, and is composed of 10 questions for each area and total 30 items. The reliability of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  = .84 was shown in this study.

**Data Collection Method:** The data collection period of this study was from February 01, 2018 to February 26, 2018, and the data collection place was a general hospital in Korea. The researcher visited the nursing departments of each hospital, explained the purpose of the research, and received permission from the head of department. After obtaining the consent of each ward nurse, only the data of nurses who agreed to participate in this study with written consent were collected. The completed questionnaire was put in an envelope and sealed by the researcher.

**Data Analysis Method:** Data were analyzed using SPSS/WIN 21.0. The relationship between the emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and quality of professional life of the subjects was analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis was used to determine the factors affecting the quality of professional life.

**Results and Discussion**

**Results**

**General Characteristics of Subjects and Emotional Labor, Emotional Intelligence, and Quality of Professional Life according to General Characteristics:**

The general characteristics of the subjects are as follows. The average age of the patients was 26-30 years (43.5%), and most of them were female (88.7%). The most common marital status was unmarried (67.8%) and no religion (47.3%). And general nurses accounted for 88.7%, the majority. As shown in table 1.

The emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and quality of professional life according to general characteristics of the subjects are as follows. Emotional labor of the subjects showed differences in Gender( $t=2.48, p=.000$ ), and Emotional intelligence showed significant differences in Age( $F=3.266, p=.023$ ), Gender( $t=-2.09, p=.000$ ), Marital status( $F=3.330, p=0.38$ ), and Religion( $F=1.014, p=.365$ ). Quality of professional life showed differences in Gender( $t=-3.48, p=.000$ ) and Religion( $F=3.688, p=.007$ ). As shown in table 1.

**Table 1: General Characteristics of Subjects and Emotional Labor, Emotional Intelligence, and Quality of Professional Life according to General Characteristics**

General Characteristics		N(%)	Emotional Labor			Emotional Intelligence			Professional Quality of life		
			Mean ± SD	t/F	p	Mean ± SD	t/F	p	Mean ± SD	t/F	p
Age	20-25	78(44.1)	32.04 ± 5.70	.746	.526	71.76 ± 12.40	3.266	.023	99.13 ± 9.47	.526	.665
	26-30	77(43.5)	32.62 ± 4.97			67.25 ± 9.33			99.43 ± 8.02		
	31-35	16(8.6)	33.50 ± 2.28			66.13 ± 5.82			97.06 ± 2.62		
	≥36	6(3.2)	34.50 ± 0.84			64.67 ± 1.03			96.67 ± 1.03		
Gender	Female	157(88.7)	32.84 ± 4.46	2.48	.000	68.45 ± 9.53	-2.09	.000	98.23 ± 6.67	-3.48	.000
	male	20(11.3)	29.90 ± 8.17			73.7 ± 16.81			104.85 ± 14.90		
Marital status	Unmarried	120(67.8)	32.51 ± 5.25	.358	.699	69.15 ± 9.53	3.330	.038	98.30 ± 8.17	2.885	.059
	Married	55(31.1)	32.40 ± 4.76			69.51 ± 12.05			8.02 ± 1.09		
	Other	2(1.1)	35.50 ± 2.12			50.00 ± 25.46			13.44 ± 9.50		
Religion	Christian	30(16.9)	32.30 ± 5.77	3412	.800	72.30 ± 11.79	2.209	.070	100.07 ± 7.27	3.688	.007
	Buddhist	20(11.3)	31.35 ± 5.95			72.55 ± 12.05			103.30 ± 9.50		
	Catholic	31(16.7)	32.42 ± 4.46			68.10 ± 8.11			97.27 ± 6.53		
	No	88(47.3)	32.78 ± 4.51			67.18 ± 9.46			97.68 ± 7.64		
	Other	8(4.3)	33.50 ± 8.28			72.25 ± 18.90			105.13 ± 14.14		
Current position	Head nurse	7(4.0)	34.57 ± 0.79	1.101	.335	64.86 ± 1.07	1.014	.365	96.86 ± 1.07	.247	.781
	Charge nurse	13(7.3)	33.77 ± 2.45			71.92 ± 10.46			99.33 ± 3.39		
	Staff nurse	157(88.7)	32.31 ± 5.30			68.99 ± 10.89			99.06 ± 8.68		

**Relationship between Emotional Labor, Emotional Intelligence, and Quality of Professional Life:** Relationships between emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and job stress are as follows. As shown in table 1.

Quality of professional life had negative correlation with Emotional labor( $r=-.114, p=.016$ ) and significant positive correlation with Emotional intelligence( $r=.274, p=.000$ ). As shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Relationship between Emotional Labor, Emotional Intelligence, and Quality of Professional Life (N = 177)**

	Emotional Labor	Emotional Intelligence	Quality of Professional Life
Emotional Labor	1		
Emotional Intelligence	-.114(.129)	1	
Quality of Professional Life	-.181(.016)	.274(.000)	1

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

**3.1.3 Factors Affecting the Quality of Professional Life of Subjects:** Emotional intelligence factors affecting the quality of professional life were self emotional appraisal ( $\beta = -.043$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and use of emotion ( $\beta = -.394$ ,  $p = .007$ ), and these variables were found to have an explanatory power of 19.7% for Quality of professional life. As shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Factors Affecting the Quality of Professional Life of Subjects (N = 177)**

Variables		$\beta$	t	p
<b>Emotional Labor</b>	Frequency of Emotional display	-.079	-.841	.401
	Attentiveness to required display rules	-.126	-1.150	.252
	Emotional dissonance	.092	.771	.442
<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>	Self Emotional Appraisal	.688	4.523	.000
	Other's Emotional Appraisal	-.043	-.373	.710
	Use of Emotion	.033	.266	.791
	Regulation of Emotion	-.394	-2.746	.007
		R <sup>2</sup> =.197, F=5.858, p=.000		

### Discussion

This study was attempted to determine the effect of emotional labor and emotional intelligence of nurses on quality of professional life.

In this study, the quality of professional life had a negative correlation with emotional labor and a positive correlation with emotional intelligence. This means that the higher the emotional labor, the lower the quality of professional life, and the higher the emotional intelligence, the higher the quality of professional life. Kim & Kim<sup>9</sup> also stated that the emotional satisfaction is lowered and the exhaustion is higher as the emotional labor is higher. Nurses experience negative emotions of emotional labor and are not satisfied with their work. This may affect the quality of nursing care for the nurses, and the nurses' own job satisfaction, quality of life, and exhaustion. Therefore, nurses need a variety of approaches to improve the quality of life related to their occupation with pride in their professional role. It is necessary to periodically check the emotional labor level<sup>19</sup> and develop a program for intervention. If emotional labor is not managed, physical and mental reactions such as anger, physical symptoms, and depression may appear in response to job stress, and at the organizational level, there may be neglect of work, an increase in mistakes, and thoughts of turnover, so emotional labor in nurses is an important issue that needs constant attention and resolution.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize the emotions of oneself and others, synchronize oneself, and manage emotions well<sup>11</sup>. Satisfaction of empathy in the

quality of professional life refers to getting satisfaction by helping others as professionals. As the results of this study, the higher the emotional labor level, the lower the degree of satisfaction obtained through professionally helping others. However, since emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize the emotions of oneself and others, emotional intelligence is expected to be a very important factor for emotional labor relaxation and quality of professional life improvement in nurses. It was found that emotional intelligence has a correlation with job satisfaction<sup>26</sup>, and there should be a policy support and management plan for emotional intelligence improvement of emotional laborers such as nurses.

Among Emotional intelligence, Emotional self-understanding and Emotion utility were found to affect the quality of professional life. Emotional intelligence is the ability to accurately understand the emotions of oneself and others in various situations, and to control and utilize their own emotions as appropriate behaviors<sup>23</sup>. In particular, nurses are professionals who provide human-centered nursing care and should take appropriate action and cope with various stress situations, and they need high emotional intelligence to assess positively and respond in the right direction under any circumstances<sup>27</sup>. In a previous study<sup>28</sup>, it was found emotional intelligence regulates the negative emotions experienced in the overall process of life, leading to positive emotions, and it was stated that higher emotional intelligence lead to higher life satisfaction and emotional stability. McQueen<sup>29</sup> also noted that emotional intelligence can be used to control emotional disharmony and emotional

labor in interpersonal relationships, because emotional intelligence can understand and manage emotions of oneself and others. One of the first things a nurse should understand in order to understand patients and others is self-understanding. Among the measures to improve emotional intelligence, the self-understanding process needs to be continually handled by nurses themselves and on an organizational level, and this is thought to be the most important basis for nurses to help them balance their work and life.

In summary, it was found that emotional self-understanding and emotional utility of emotional intelligence influence the quality of professional life of nurses.

This implies that emotional intelligence has a significant explanatory power in the quality of professional life of nurses. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the quality of professional life through education, training, and programs to improve the emotional intelligence of nurses. This study was meaningful in that the factors of emotional labor and emotional intelligence affecting the quality of professional lives of nurses were identified and the relationship between variables was attempted.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of emotional labor and emotional intelligence of nurses on quality of professional life, and was attempted to provide basic data for enhancing the understanding of nurses, reducing the emotional labor of nurses, and establishing plans for adjusting and utilizing emotions. As a result, it was found that Emotional labor of nurses had a negative correlation with Quality of professional life, and Emotional intelligence was found to have a positive correlation. In addition, emotional intelligence and emotional utility among emotional intelligence were factors influencing quality of professional life. Based on the above results, the following is proposed. In order to improve the quality of professional life of nurses, it is necessary to develop emotional training programs that enhance the emotional intelligence of nurses.

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**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

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