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Factor Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Scale and Its Relationship with Perceived Stress in Malaysian Dental Undergraduates

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This study investigates the factor structure of an emotional intelligence (EI) scale and its association with perceived stress (PS) in dental undergraduates from three Malaysian universities. First year dental undergraduates from three public universities were invited to complete a set of questionnaires on age, gender and satisfaction with career choice, EI and PS. Of 203 questionnaires distributed, 158 (78%) were returned fully completed. Females were three times (75%) the number of males (25%). Majority of the students (68%) were satisfied with their choice of dentistry as a career. Mean EI score reported was 120.3 (95% CI 118.4 -122.2), and mean PS score was 21.7(95% CI 20.8.22.6). Students who were not satisfied with their career choice had higher PS scores ($p<0.01$). Correlational analysis showed an inverse relationship between EI and PS ($r=-0.25$, $p<0.05$). Factor analysis confirmed four factors which comprise: optimism/mood regulation, utilisation of emotions, appraisal of emotions and social skills. Comparing mean Factor scores by centre using ANOVA gave a $p=0.04$. With posthoc tests using LSD, mean score for Factor 2 (utilisation of emotion) in Centre 2 was significantly lower compared to Centre 3($p=0.02$). Identifying which EI factors to be enhanced may help students manage their stress levels.

ORAL PRESENTATION: SO-3