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A Novel Study to Assess Diagnostic Medical Sonography Students Belongingness in the Clinical Learning Environment

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Outstanding Presentation Award Second Place

Abstract

Objective: The study purpose was to explore diagnostic medical sonography (DMS) students' feeling of belongingness in the clinical learning environment (CLE). Materials and Methods: This descriptive comparative study used the Belongingness Scale-Clinical Placement Experience (BES-CPE) questionnaire and demographic questions to assess students' felt belongingness in their CLE. The sampling frame included all DMS student members of a professional ultrasound organization and seven DMS programs not requiring membership. Descriptive and inferential statistics analyzed the variables and their relationships. Results: 42 respondents completed the survey and 88.1% were female. An overall BES-CPE mean score of 3.71 indicated students do experience some felt belongingness in their CLE. Those 27 years of age and up reported significantly lower means on five BES-CPE items than those 24-26 years of age. No relationship existed between belongingness and gender. Fifty percent of students experienced belongingness by the end of week 2 and those who felt belonging earlier in their clinical rotation or learned in a small ultrasound department (5 ultrasound rooms or fewer) reported significantly higher mean scores on 16 BES-CPE items. Conclusion: Belongingness in the CLE plays a critical role in student motivation to learn, in clinical skills competence and self-confidence, and in professional identity development. This novel study found sonography students experience some felt belongingness in their CLE. It is recommended that programs evaluate their CLE for belongingness and consider the study's findings on the relationships between belongingness and age, gender, clinical placement time, and department size during clinical placement decisions.

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