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MEASURING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE PBL PROGRAM OF SHARJAH MEDICAL COLLEGE

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Statement of the Problem: Students' perception of their educational environment has a significant impact on their behavior and academic progress. Therefore, the worldwide usage of innovative problem-based learning (PBL) medical programs requires major changes in their educational environments. Therefore, measuring students' perceptions of the complex PBL environment has become a critical necessity as a determinant of students' academic success and as a part of attaining the quality standards of education.

Aim: The aim of this study was to evaluate students' perceptions in the preclinical phase of the PBL educational environment in the new Sharjah Medical College, UAE; and to recommend remedial procedures.

Methodology: The English version of the Dundee Ready Education Environment Measure (DREEM) inventory was submitted to 250 students in years 1, 2, and 3. The data were analyzed using the SPSS 20 software, and significance was taken at $P < 0.05$. The survey was performed in a mid-semester week.

Findings: 215 students responded to the questionnaire (100% response rate). The overall DREEM score was 113.4/200 (56.7%). First-year students expressed higher overall significant level of perception (119.4/200) than second-year (107.4/200) and third-year (112.7/200) students. In addition, first-year students perceived their learning, teaching, and academic climates as more significant than the other two batches. The scores obtained in the five domains were as follows; 28/48 in perception of learning, 26/44 in perception of teaching, 18/32 in academic self-perceptions, 27/48 in perceptions of atmosphere, and 15/28 in social self-perceptions. First-year students achieved the highest score (18.7/32) in the academic self-perception. The total score was significantly higher in female than in male students (115.9 vs. 108.1).

Conclusion: The PBL environment is generally perceived positively by our medical students. Nevertheless, areas such as curriculum overload and inadequate student support still require further fine-tuning and remedial measures.

Biography

Emad Nosair has built his 30-year expertise in education in both traditional and PBL programs. He has MSc in Leadership in Health Professionals Education, RCSI. His main interest was to provide medical students in SDL programs with comfortable educational environment for attaining the best quality of learning. Therefore, based on the outcomes of the current research, it was followed by another study for measuring student workload in such complex PBL settings to provide students with adequate time for deep learning and to avoid their overload which has negative impact on their academic progress as well as on their feedback to faculty and to the institution.

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