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Utilizing Team Based Games to Improve Social Belonging Amongst Nurse Practitioner Students

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Keywords

Social belonging; Team based games; Interpersonal skills; Advanced Practice Nursing; Students, Nursing; Curriculum; Social Skills; Education, Nursing, Baccalaureate

Abstract

A sense of belonging, which includes feelings of acceptance, connection, and value alignment, has been shown to be an important concept in nursing education (Singer et al, 2022). Nursing students who feel as though they belong not only report more positive clinical learning experiences, but also increased personal satisfaction with the learning environment (Albloushi et al., 2019). Evidence suggests that curriculum which focuses on the development of strong interpersonal skills including communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution can help to foster a sense of belonging amongst nursing students, which will later support their transition into the team based clinical environment (Ching et al., 2022; Singer et al., 2022).

Nursing educators can help to foster a sense of belonging amongst their students while promoting effective learning experiences that help to meet professional competencies by promoting the development of strong interpersonal skills throughout the curriculum (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2021; Singer et al., 2022). Game based learning is a promising educational intervention that has been shown to improve communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution among healthcare students (including nurses) within interprofessional teams (Feldhacker et al., 2021; Fusco et al., 2022a; 2022b; 2023; van Peppen et al., 2022).

As the pediatric nurse practitioner (PNP) program has continued to enroll more diverse cohorts of students, faculty identified a need to provide interventions during instruction time to address the interpersonal skills identified by AACN, with the aim to also increase sense of social belonging amongst the group.

This study was designed to assess the influence of an educational game-based curriculum on the feelings of social belonging amongst a cohort of PNP students using a mixed methods concurrent design. Third year PNP nursing students were invited to participate in the yearlong intervention, which included one educational game per term, during their clinical practicum course. Participants completed a “Perceived Cohesion Scale” pretest prior to engaging in the team games, and again as a post test at the conclusion of the intervention (Chin et al., 1999). Team games were chosen by course faculty in collaboration with a senior learning specialist with a focus on the themes of communication, collaboration and conflict resolution. Participants each completed a self-report measure, along with several open-ended questions, at the end of each game. Data collection is currently ongoing and will be complete by the time of the presentation. Emphasis will be given to the quantitative data (single arm; pre-posttest) that will be interpreted through the lens of the qualitative data (thematic analyses).

Results from the initial cohort will be used to expand this intervention to include both clinical years of the PNP program to further develop these essential advanced practice nursing skills. However, this innovative curricular design could be applied to any health care professional student, as these are crucial skills for all clinical care providers and have the potential to impact future satisfaction as well as ultimately improve delivery of patient care.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Summarize the benefits of implementing a game-based curriculum in the clinical learning environment for advanced practice nursing students
- Describe how the development of key interpersonal skills can help to improve students' overall sense of belonging and further enhance their learning
- Identify techniques to translate concepts learned through the games into the team based clinical practice environment

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