Nursing Student Engagement in an Online Environment

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Introduction

Student engagement in school has been one method of evaluating a student’s thinking skills. In online synchronous classes, student engagement does not always elicit the same attention as in traditional classrooms. A literature review was conducted to determine how synchronous online courses compared to traditional classrooms affect nursing student engagement. Traditionally, nursing students require hands-on training to develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Nursing faculty observe the nursing students in clinical settings and lab to evaluate the students’ level of learning. Online clinical and lab presents challenges for the students in their development of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Exposing nursing students to clinical settings to gain insightful knowledge and develop critical thinking skills can be challenging to reproduce in the online forum. The purpose is to provide an evidence-based review of teaching practices about student engagement. Chung and Chen (2019) found that student engagement was vital to student success (p. 2).

Background

Due to the pandemic that occurred, traditional clinical and classroom teaching was changed to an online environment overnight. Nursing students at a local community college went from actively engaging in clinical settings to sitting in front of their computers and listening to a guest speaker for hours. The nursing faculty struggled to keep nursing students engaged during the online clinical sessions. Many students were distracted and not engaged, demonstrated by their reluctance to appear on camera and participate in clinical discussions. Faculty could not determine the student’s level of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Some students were dismissed from the program due to inattentiveness. A literature review was conducted to review the research of comparing student engagement in online classes versus traditional classrooms.

PSCOT Question

In nursing programs (P), how does using synchronous video conferencing (S) compared to traditional classroom lecture (C) affect student engagement?

Methods

A database search was conducted in CINHAL, PubMed, Gale America OneFile, Educational Research Complete and ERIC from the Sacred Heart University Library from January 2016 to November 2020. Keywords used were, Nursing students, undergraduate degree, Online learning, Distance learning, e-learning, traditional, non-traditional, synchronous, student engagement, face to face. Seven pieces of evidence were found and reviewed. Exclusions were blended classrooms and flipped classrooms. JHEBP Appendix E Research Evidence Appraisal tool was utilized to evaluate the following evidence.

JHEBP INDIVIDUAL EVIDENCE SUMMARY TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chung, J. &amp; Chen, H.</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Qualitative Study</td>
<td>Undergraduate Nursing Students</td>
<td>Clinical Setting</td>
<td>Student engagement was higher in the online setting compared to traditional teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton, D., Pearce, J. &amp; Moser, D.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Mixed Method Design</td>
<td>Preregistration Adult Nursing Students</td>
<td>Online - Classroom</td>
<td>Students reported higher satisfaction and engagement with online lecture than in traditional lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bramer, C.</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Preregistration adult nursing student experience of online learning: A qualitative study</td>
<td>Preregistration Adult Nursing Students</td>
<td>Online - Classroom</td>
<td>Students found learning better and participate more in online compared to traditional face to face lectures because they receive constant feedback on what they are doing correctly face to face interactions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations

A small number of studies were identified and the results may not be generalized. Most of the studies were conducted pre-pandemic and some participants were able to choose between online or traditional classrooms, which could determine the individual’s level of participation in engagement. Also, research would have determine if nursing students actually meet learning outcomes in the online clinical sessions.

Implications

Exposing nursing students to clinical settings to gain insightful knowledge and develop critical thinking skills can be challenging to replicate in the online forum. Clinical nursing educators will have to re-assess their teaching strategies and develop a rapport with students to improve their engagement online. If online clinical sessions enabled students to meet course objectives, this could open up more availability for students to gain clinical objectives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there needs to be more research on what teaching strategies are the most beneficial for student engagement in online classroom. Not all teaching strategies will be effective online in developing nursing skills and higher level thou. More research is needed to determine if this online class teach strategies result in nurses learning needed clinical skills.

References


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