

Empathy levels among dental students and professors from a dental school in the Dominican Republic

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Abstract

Introduction: The concept of empathy has been incorporated as one of the key elements for the achievement of the teaching-learning process goals in health science students. **Objective:** To estimate and compare the levels of empathy among dental students and professors in the undergraduate dental medicine program at the Universidad Central del Este (Dominican Republic). **Materials and methods:** Cross-sectional study. The study population (n=264) was divided into two groups: the first consisted of students in their first to fifth year of dental school (N=223; n=215), distributed in two areas (basic-preclinical and clinical courses), while the second group comprised professors working in both areas in the dental school of the university (N=53; n=49). The Jefferson Scale of Empathy (S-Version) was used. The descriptive analysis of the data included the estimation of means, standard deviations and percentages, and the reliability of the data was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. In addition, a two-way ANOVA was performed, calculating the effect size and the statistical power of the test; furthermore, when the Fisher's exact test was significant for any factor, Tukey's test was used to estimate differences between means. A significance level of $\alpha < 0.05$ and $\beta < 0.20$ was established. **Results:** Overall empathy scores and compassionate care dimension scores among the professor group did not differ significantly from the scores obtained by the students (basic-preclinical and clinical area), but there were differences between students from both areas ($p < 0.05$). There were no significant differences between the three subgroups in the Perspective Taking and Walking in the Patient's Shoes dimensions ($p = 0.428$ and $p = 0.866$). **Conclusion:** The levels of empathy and compassionate care dimension of professors are similar to those of students in general (regardless of the area). © 2021 Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Author keywords

Dentistry; Empathy (MeSH); Faculty; Students