

CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF BIOSCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Nursing was one of the last health professions to be established in the higher education sector. A lingering challenge is the integration of bioscience into nursing curriculum. Research suggests that students perceive bioscience teaching to be difficult thereby contributing to heightened anxiety. It has been proposed that high content volume, lack of secondary school science, and predominance of science lecturers without clinical practice experience, may lead to a bioscience disconnect with curricula. To ascertain the extent of this problem, we undertook a cross-sectional designed study of commencing, second and third year undergraduate nursing students ($n=566$). They were surveyed about perceptions, knowledge and approaches to bioscience learning. Preliminary analysis revealed similar findings between the three different cohorts. Generally, students' perceived bioscience subjects to be difficult, more challenging and requiring more study hours than clinical nursing subjects. Interestingly, the perception of difficulty and associated anxieties were found in both commencing and existing students. Moreover, students with secondary school biology combined with another science subject perceived bioscience teaching more favourably compared to those who had studied one secondary school science subject. University coursework needs to embed strategies to minimise anxieties about learning bioscience by using innovative deliveries and scaffolded assessments that target the learner's needs.

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