

Experiences of Black, Asian and ethnically diverse student Therapeutic Radiographers; microaggressions and racism in the dual learning environment – results from a UK online survey

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Background

Racism and discrimination are unacceptable in Therapeutic Radiography education; however, incidents are reported to be experienced by students (1). Therapeutic Radiography students negotiate a challenging dual learning environment within the academic and clinical setting, however, for students from ethnically diverse backgrounds, this may bring additional challenges which may not exist for white students (1, 2). As part of a wider mixed methods doctoral study, the incidence and nature of racist occurrences and microaggressions in the academic and placement environments are explored.

Methods

An online survey was promoted through Higher Education Institutions (HEI), to students who self-identified as coming from Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse backgrounds, studying radiotherapy as undergraduates in the UK. Questions were developed from a collaborative student workshop (3) and themes from the literature exploring learning experience, racism and microaggressions, career aspirations and perceived influencers of success.

Descriptive Results

35 students took part, from 8 of the 14 universities contacted, across England (North and South regions) Wales and Scotland. 74% were female and 26% male with 89% of respondents aged between 18-29. Most were in their final year of study (45.7%). 40% of participants identified as coming from a Black African or Black British background, with 28.6% identifying as coming from a Pakistani or Pakistani British ethnic background. Representation from Chinese, Indian and 'other' Asian backgrounds was also seen.

Quantitative Results

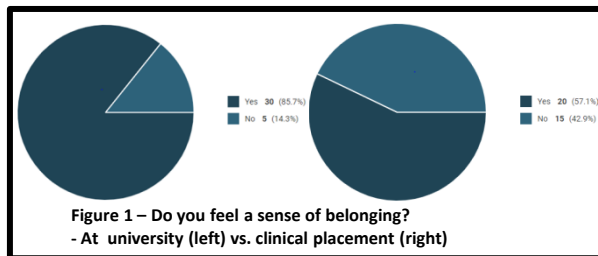


Figure 1 – Do you feel a sense of belonging? - At university (left) vs. clinical placement (right)

A greater sense of belonging was reported in the university learning space than in the placement setting (see Figure 1 above). Incidents of microaggression were reported to occur more frequently in clinical placement, compared to the university environment, but uncertainty in being sure a microaggression had taken place was indicated (see figure 2 below) possibly reflecting the insidious nature of these acts. Overt racism was infrequently seen in both settings but was still more likely in the placement environment and attributed to come from a range of sources.

	University	Placement
Yes	14.3%	40%
No	80%	51.4%
Not sure	5.7%	8.6%

Figure 2 – Have you experienced a microaggression?

	University	Placement
Yes	2.9%	22.9%
No	97.1%	77.1%

Figure 3 – Have you experienced an overt act of racism?

Qualitative Results

"I'm not confident things can get better but instead we just have to learn how to not let people who are racist get to us"

"I always get given opportunity to learn and never feel discriminated against due to my ethnic/religious background"

"The unwritten law esp at my centre is that its only for white people"

"I haven't experienced microaggressions towards myself personally, but I have witnessed them during clinical placement particularly towards Black members of staff but also towards Asian members of staff"

"Patient asking me my ethnicity and then discussing their annoyance with 'immigrants'"

Figure 4. Qualitative comments from students on their experiences in the academic and clinical placement environment

Conclusion

This research provides evidence that Therapeutic Radiography students are experiencing racism and microaggressions during their training. Further research is needed to explore how the experiences of race and racism in the dual-earning environment, impact students' learning experiences, well-being, and academic success. An antiracist agenda is critical in radiotherapy education to eliminate racist incidents and develop allyship amongst all involved in clinical education to support inclusive clinical practice.

Acknowledgements

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References

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