Participation in online learning environments, especially in asynchronous discussions, is an essential element for student engagement in online learning. Research is plentiful related to online discussions, but there is little information related to nursing student perceptions of and participation in online discussions. Learner motivation is associated with student success in the online learning environment. There are two different types of learner motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation, doing something because it is interesting, is associated with participation in discussion topic choices. External demands, both work and personal, can also affect a student’s intrinsic motivation through altering their control. The purpose of this study is to examine if discussion topic choice is associated with student motivation to participate in asynchronous online discussions. Post-licensure undergraduate (RN-BSN/RN-MSN) and graduate (RN-MSN) students (N=350) were distributed an online anonymous survey consisting of 10 (ten) questions. Email communication was utilized to obtain informed consent along with inclusion of the confidential survey link, which was available to students for approximately eight (8) weeks. Students were sent one email reminder approximately two (2) weeks after initial survey distribution. The survey was composed of five (5) demographic questions, four (4) motivation to participate in asynchronous online discussion questions, and one (1) preference of discussion topic question. A response rate of 20% (N=69) was achieved, with 49% MSN (graduate) students (n = 33) and 51% RN-BSN/RN-MSN (undergraduate) students (n= 36), participating in the survey. Seventy-nine percent of MSN students were employed full-time, 86% of RN-MSN students were employed full-time, and 76% of RN-BSN students were employed full-time. MSN (79%) and MSN-RN students (86%) felt that their motivation to participate in discussions was related to their employment status, whereas RN-BSN students reported a much lower relationship (38%). Seventy-nine percent of MSN students and 71% percent of RN-MSN students reported that the current demands in their life affected their motivation to participate in online discussion, whereas only 57% of RN-BSN students reported the same. The majority of students felt that instructor participation in the discussion had no effect on their motivation to participate. When classified into undergraduate and graduate groups, graduate nursing students preferred a choice of discussion topics in which to participate ($\chi^2 10.851, p=.004$). Providing students with discussion topic choices is associated with intrinsic motivation and increased online discussion participation.
Keywords:
Motivation to participate, Nursing students participation in online asynchronous discussions and Online asynchronous discussions

References:

Abstract Summary:
Asynchronous discussion is a commonly used tool for engaging students in the online learning environment. The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of discussion topic choice on a student’s motivation to participate in an online discussion.

Content Outline:

Student Motivation to Participate in Asynchronous Online Discussions

Content Outline
I. Introduction
A. Participation in online asynchronous discussions
B. Lack of research regarding nursing students - there is a robust amount of literature examining student motivation to participate in online discussions. However, few studies have examined online nursing students and asynchronous discussion participation.
II. Body
A. Main Point #1- Participation is paramount in the achievement of learning outcomes in higher education.

1. Supporting point #1 – Motivation to participate
   a.) Intrinsic - completing a task because it is of interest or satisfying
   b.) Extrinsic - completing a task because of external rewards (e.g., grades)

B. Main Point #2 – Relationship between discussion topic choice and motivation to participate in an online nursing course.

1. Supporting point #1 – Choice of discussion topics
   a.) Discussion topic choice and motivation - Does having a choice regarding discussion topic increase a student's motivation to participate?
   b.) Comparison of graduate and undergraduate students - Graduate (n=33) vs undergraduate (n=36) groups compared using chi square. Results were significant at p < .004.

C. Main Point #3 – Additional external factors affecting nursing students’ motivation to participate in online asynchronous discussions

1. Supporting point #1 – Family obligations
2. Supporting point #2 – Work responsibilities
3. Supporting point #3 – Instructor participation

III. Conclusion

A. Graduate students are more motivated to participate in asynchronous online discussions when given a number of discussion topics from which to choose.

B. External factors have a considerable impact on the motivation of online nursing students to participate in asynchronous discussions regardless of level of education (graduate, undergraduate).

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