

Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

Impact of Caring Social Presence in Online Graduate Nursing Education

Catherine Dorothy Flanagan, MSN, FNP

Department of Graduate Nursing, Saint Luke's College of Health Sciences at Rockhurst University, Kansas City, MO, USA

Purpose: To investigate the impact of the caring social presence technique, *Microsoft Teams*, on student educational outcomes in fully online graduate nursing education. Social presence, a concept first developed by Short et al. (1976), is the sense of being with another human in an online space. It has gained significant interest in distance education as an integral component to creating effective online learning (Claywell et al., 2016). When taken a step further and conducted in a caring manner through interventions that are engaging, use real-time communication, and deliver a perceived efficiency of empathetic response, student satisfaction and educational outcomes can improve (Chang et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Welch et al., 2015). With the continued growth in online nursing education and the unique workplace challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic increase in remote-work, skilled communication takes on a new priority for both educators and students to fill the gaps left by the formal and task-based communication characteristics of email and various Learning Management Systems (AACN, 2018; AACN, 2020; Lee et al., 2018).

Methods: Institutional Review Board consultation with the local university is pending, with an anticipated exempt status. The effectiveness of *Microsoft Teams* will be evaluated in its function to establish caring social presence with subsequent outcomes of improved student satisfaction and perceived knowledge gain over the Fall 2020 semester, with project implementation scheduled to occur November to December 2020. This project is a non-experimental, two-cohort, post-only design consisting of 149 currently enrolled graduate-level nursing students. Cohort #1 will include participants currently enrolled in course(s) using the caring social presence technique *Microsoft Teams*. Cohort #2 will include participants currently enrolled in graduate-level nursing course(s) that are not actively using *Microsoft Teams*. Inclusion criteria include graduate-level nursing students 18 years of age or older currently enrolled in fully online graduate-level didactic nursing courses. Exclusion criteria include any participant less than 18 years of age, faculty members, participants currently on a leave of absence, and survey responses from hybrid, clinical, or on-site courses. Participants meeting criteria are invited to complete an anonymous and voluntary three-part Likert-Scale survey that will include collection of demographics and the following tools: Social Presence Scale, Student Perspective of Caring Online Tool, and Course Evaluation Survey.

Results: All surveys will be powered by Research Electronic Data Capture secure web-based program (REDCap) and data analysis will be performed utilizing SPSS statistic software. An independent sample t-test will be used to compare the two cohorts regarding social presence measures, caring behaviors, student satisfaction, and perceived knowledge gain. An independent sample t-test will be used to evaluate for significant differences in demographic data between groups. Mann-Whitney will be utilized for comparison of question data within each survey.

Conclusion: The caring social presence technique, *Microsoft Teams*, is expected to improve caring social presence in fully online nursing courses with subsequent improvement in student satisfaction and perceived knowledge gain. These conceptual findings lay the groundwork for improved skilled communication in virtual inter-office communication with subsequent positive impact on the workplace environment.

Title:

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Keywords:

Caring, Distance Learning and Social Presence

Abstract Summary:

Social presence has been established in the literature as essential to creating an effective online learning environment, especially when delivered in a caring manner. This study looks at how one technique, *Microsoft Teams*, can improve caring social presence in distance education with outcomes of improved student satisfaction and educational outcomes.

Late Breaking Reason:

This study introduces an innovative approach to communication between instructors and students, allowing for the creation of *caring social presence* within distance education. This not only has positive implications for student satisfaction and learning outcomes, but also provides insight into the skilled communication necessary for a healthy virtual work environment.

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First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Catherine Dorothy Flanagan, MSN, FNP

Saint Luke's College of Health Sciences at Rockhurst University

Department of Graduate Nursing

Assistant Professor

Kansas City, Missouri

USA

Author Summary: Catherine Flanagan has been in the nursing profession for over 12 years, with varied experience in telemetry, long-term care, and emergency room nursing. She graduated in 2013 with an MSN-FNP and made the transition to full-time education in 2017. She currently teaches as an Assistant Professor of Nursing while maintaining outpatient clinic hours as a Family Nurse Practitioner. She is currently pursuing her DNP through the University of Missouri – Kansas City.