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Title	Pharmacy students' experiences of discrimination during experiential learning placement - a quantitative survey
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Publication date	2023-04-17
Original Citation	McCarthy, R, Cleary, P & Sahm, L J 2023, 'Pharmacy students' experiences of discrimination during experiential learning placement - a quantitative survey', Health Services Research and Pharmacy Practice Conference, Birmingham, United Kingdom, 9/04/19.
Type of publication	Conference item
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Download date	2026-10-13 22:03:04
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/18593

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Pharmacy Students' Experiences of Discrimination during Experiential Learning Placement - a quantitative survey

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BACKGROUND

- Discrimination in the workplace is defined by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission as 'less favourable treatment' than another employee in a comparable setting. (1)
- When pharmacy students undertake experiential learning placements (ELP's), they become part of the workplace and therefore potential candidates for exposure to discrimination.
- This study aimed to investigated if pharmacy students experienced discrimination during ELP with a focus on equality, diversity and inclusivity, (EDI). The prevalence and types of discrimination encountered were also to be examined.

METHODS

- A 20-item quantitative survey was created relating to differing areas of discrimination including age, gender, appearance, sexual identity, race/ethnic origin, or English language proficiency.
- Questions included 4 binary yes/no responses, 6 were demographic in nature. A free text box for additional comments was included.
- The survey was emailed to 3rd, 4th, and 5th year pharmacy students in University College Cork (UCC).
- Data from the survey was entered into Microsoft Excel for descriptive statistics which included percentages and frequencies.
- Further statistical analysis was undertaken using SPSS version 28, chi-squared tests were undertaken and a $p \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

- Of 201 students, 84 completed the survey (response rate=41.8%).
- 72.6% (*n=61*) female, and 27.4% (*n=23*) male.
- 3rd year 53.6% (*n=45*), 4th year 14.3% (*n=12*) and 5th year 37.1% (*n=27*).
- Figures 1 and 2 indicate participant age category and sexual orientation.
- 39.3% (*n=33*) reported experiencing at least one incident of discrimination during ELP.
- 19% (*n=16*) reported experiences of discrimination based on age, this had the highest incidence.
- Chi-squared test of independence to investigate the association between age and discrimination based on age, showed no statistically significant association between these two variables, $X2(4, N=84)=2.5$, *p= 0.664.*
- 7.1% (*n=6*) reported gender discrimination.
- 7.1% (*n=6*) reported discrimination based on appearance, of which 66% were female (*n=4*).
- No student reported racial discrimination.

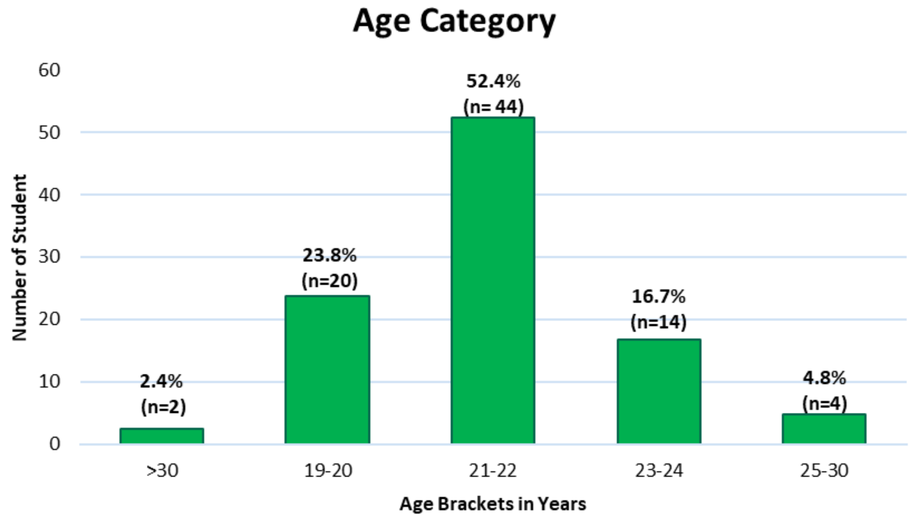

Figure 1: Respondent's Age Category

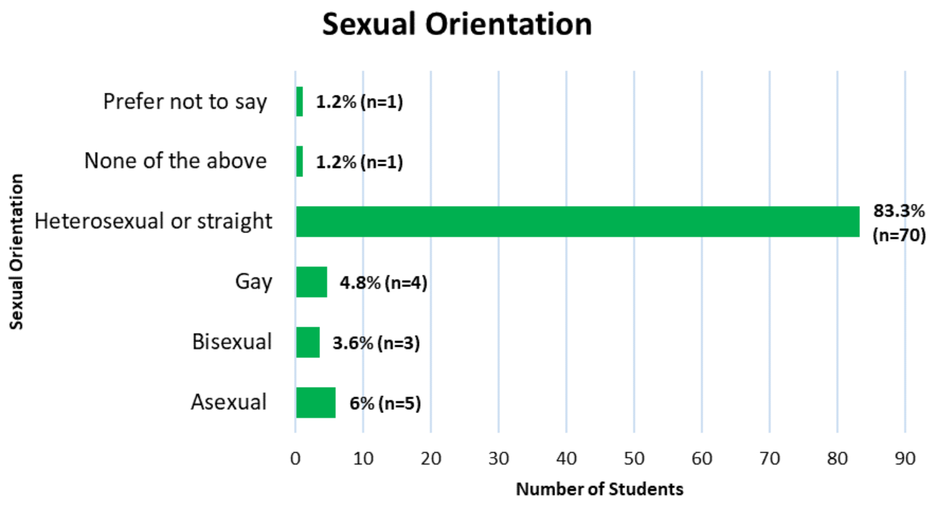

Figure 2: Respondent's Sexual Orientation

CONCLUSIONS

- Almost two in five pharmacy students in UCC report experiencing discrimination on ELP.
- Discrimination can have a negative impact on mental health; therefore, efforts are needed to reduce its prevalence.
- Students should receive awareness training and encouragement to report episodes of discrimination.
- Preceptors may also benefit from training in how to support students experiencing discrimination.

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