**APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES WITH FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER: A MIXED METHODS STUDY**

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**Objectives:** Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe a range of effects associated with prenatal exposure to alcohol. Despite an estimated prevalence rate of roughly 4%, current Canadian research demonstrates that health care and social service providers are significantly lacking in FASD awareness and diagnostic understanding. The 2015 Canadian diagnostic guideline suggests that a multidisciplinary approach is necessary to make an accurate diagnosis and provide effective treatment plans. Psychologists are an integral member of this core diagnostic team. Investigating psychology students’ knowledge and experiences regarding FASD provides a unique perspective as psychology students are still learning and may demonstrate a flexibility of knowledge and understanding (e.g., they may be more open to adapting to new and emerging guidelines and practices). The current study aims to understand applied psychology graduate students’ knowledge, attitudes, and experiences regarding FASD.

**Methods:** This sequential, two-phase mixed methods study is part of a larger, ongoing project that is currently being conducted at Laurentian University. Participants in the current study are Masters of Applied Psychology students (n = ~10). The first phase of this study involves the completion of two questionnaires: the Health Care Student Questionnaire and the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Survey for Health Care Students. The quantitative questionnaire data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess participants’ general knowledge of FASD. All participants in Phase I were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview in Phase II. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Using thematic analysis, interview transcripts were coded in a systematic fashion. These codes were then used to generate common themes across the interviews. Data that is retrieved from both phases will be integrated to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences, knowledge, and attitudes of graduate psychology students regarding FASD.

**Results:** Data collection for this research is currently in progress and results will be available at the time of the conference. To date, seven questionnaires and four interviews with psychology students have been completed and transcribed, and further participant recruitment is in progress. Preliminary data analysis reveals that 86% participants indicated that providing a FASD diagnosis would be beyond their future scope of practice as a psychologist, and 71% do not have enough knowledge or access to resources to meet the needs of these individuals.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** The inclusion of applied psychology students is important, as they are studying to become future psychologists and/or to work in the psychology field. The high prevalence rate of FASD in Canada, and the likelihood of psychologists encountering and becoming involved with the diagnosis of individuals with FASD, is why it is essential to understand students’ experiences with FASD and to ensure that students are prepared when encountering FASD in future practice. The outcomes of this study will have implications for future psychology program curricula, as well as improving the students’ knowledge and understanding regarding FASD.

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