

The Effect of Video Conferencing on Social Participation of OT Students

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PURPOSE: Videoconferencing has become integral to OT education after use during Covid. Videoconferencing offers flexibility and student connectedness. However, criticisms exist around interpersonal skill development for students. The purpose was to understand OT student participation in videoconferencing in order to develop academic programs that balance convenience with deep learning. The research question is how does video conferencing impact the social participation of Occupational Therapy students?

DESIGN: A cross-sectional survey examined students' attitudes towards Zoom use. Six cohorts of OT students were recruited via an email invitation (Freshmen - Graduate). Inclusion criteria were matriculation in an entry-level OT program.

METHOD: The 31-item Attitudes Towards Zoom (ATZ) questionnaire was adapted from the Zoom Experience Fatigue survey based on current literature. The ATZ included 4 sections: personal health (PH, MH, EH), social interaction (SI), classroom (CP) and campus participation (QP), scored similar to a Likert scale. Students completed surveys during OT seminars. Data analysis included descriptives and ANOVA.

RESULTS: Participants were 275 OT students: 22% freshmen, 16% sophomores, 10.5% juniors, 13.5% seniors, 31% graduates, 6% doctoral, ages 18-27 (MA 20.8 years). For PH, over 84% reported back and eye discomfort; MH, 65% noted stress and anxiety; EH, 56% noted irritability; SI, 65% were positive about communication with families; CP, 75%-92% were less motivated and focused for classes; QP, 52% were less likely to join new clubs. Significant differences were found across cohorts.

CONCLUSION: Videoconferencing was fatiguing and less engaging than in-person for students, although convenient for communication.

IMPACT STATEMENT: OT educators may consider selective use of videoconferencing for in-depth learning experiences and full co-curricular engagement. Student input is critical for determining effective use of new technology.

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