EATING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS IN STUDENTS MAJORING IN NUTRITION vs NURSING

Maria Anderson | Jayne Byrne MS, RD, LD
Nutrition Department | College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN

Introduction

• Congruency between personal beliefs and attitudes and messages conveyed by nutrition counselors is essential for effective communication between counselor and client.
• Eating Competence is a concept that refers to individuals who are relaxed and flexible with food choices and confident in their ability to nourish their body.  
• Counselors who are competent eaters may convey these desirable attributes to clients.
• The Ellyn Satter Eating Competency Inventory (ecSI) is a validated and reliable survey designed to assess eating attitudes and behaviors. Eating Competence is identified with a score above 32 with a maximum score of 48.  

Purpose

To assess eating attitudes and behaviors using the ecSI in students intending to become health professionals with the potential to provide nutrition counseling and education.

Methods

• Received permission to use the ecSI from the Ellyn Satter Institute
• Obtained IRB approval from the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University
• First year and senior nutrition and nursing students were contacted through email to participate
• Participants (n=59: 51 females, 9 males) gave informed consent and then completed the ecSI
• Data analyzed for statistical significance with an Independent T-test using SPSS

Results

• A score of 32 or greater indicating Eating Competence (Ect) occurred for 69% of respondents. Nutrition majors scored significantly (p=0.13) higher on the ecSI than nursing majors with average scores of 36.37 and 32.23, respectively
• No significant statistical differences between first-year and senior students
• 30.5% of participants responded that they are never or rarely relaxed about eating

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<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>STD. DEV.</th>
<th>N</th>
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<td>7.75</td>
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<td>7.58</td>
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</table>

Breakdown of students reporting Eating Competent scores (Ect) and Not Eating Competent Scores (NECt)

<table>
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<th>Ect</th>
<th>NECt</th>
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<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>69%</td>
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</tr>
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Conclusion

• Nutrition students were generally more Eating Competent than nursing majors.
• Nutrition majors accounted for 56% of the Ect scores. A goal would be to have greater than 90% of students to score as Eating Competence.
• Students who are never or rarely relaxed about eating may model unhealthy attitudes and behaviors to their future clients.
• It would be beneficial to repeat the study when the first-years are seniors to assess longitudinal changes in eating competency

Acknowledgements

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