THE ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS FIRST YEAR COURSES AMONG DENTAL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.

A COMMUNITY DENTISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF BACHELOR OF DENTAL SURGERY DEGREE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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DECLARATION

I INDUSWE BENJAMIN hereby declare that this presentation is my original work and have never been submitted by anyone before for any other degree, diploma or certificate in this or any other institution.

Signature ........................................ Date ....................................
APPROVAL.

This project has been submitted for the partial fulfillment of the degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery with our approval as University supervisors.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother who did everything in her capacity to make this project a reality, my father for his encouragement and advice not to quit.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

I appreciate my supervisors Dr. Gathece.L.W and Owino Richard for their dedication and constant corrections during my work. All the dental students for their response and in whose hands the future of dentistry lies. I also thank all the group k members and Dorothy Kigen for sacrificing her time to ensure this was a success. I thank all who contributed to this project God bless you.
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ABBREVIATED WORDS AND NAMES.

UoN  University of Nairobi

BDS  Bachelor of dental surgery

SPSS Statistical package for social sciences.
SUMMARY.

Background  this was a study of attitude and perception of dental students towards first year courses. These may be positive or negative depending on the respondents.

Objectives; the main objective was to determine the attitude and perception towards first year courses among dental students at UoN.

Design; it was a descriptive cross sectional study.

Setting; it was among UoN dental students.

Study participants; these were 81 students pursuing the degree of BDS at the UoN in their first second third or fourth year of study.

Methods; Stratified random sampling method was used. Willing students filled the self administered questionnaires after which they were collected by the administrators. Consideration was given to the year of study during this data collection. Data was coded and analyzed using a full SPSS. The measures computed included percentages and chi2. The information was presented in form of tables, graphs and pie charts.

Results; Only 30.8% of the students chose dentistry because they liked it. Generally students agree that all the first year courses are relevant except biochemistry which 48.7% of the respondents find irrelevant. Most students(51%) think biochemistry is irrelevant because it has no application in the clinical subjects. However, students don’t find the other course totally relevant they find some parts irrelevant for example 40% feel dissection of other parts except the head and neck makes that part of the course irrelevant but not the whole course. Most of the respondents 23% feel that the number of years for the 1st course should be increased. The attitude and perception towards the courses does not improve as the students progress with their studies.

Discussion; About 30% of students chose dentistry because they liked it while 11.5% were forced by parents or guardians and 5.1% because of fast employment. This agrees with a study
by Tracey McDowall and Bevely Jackley on what influences accounting student’s attitudes towards accounting as a profession which were intrinsic interest in the content of accounting courses, influences of parents and friends. Results obtained from the study 95.2% who agree in clinical years that human anatomy is relevant. The above result agrees with a study by B.J. Moxham and O.Plaisant on the perception of medical students towards the clinical relevance of Anatomy which showed that students at all stages of their medical course share with professional anatomists the view that anatomy is a very important subject for their clinical studies.

Conclusion; Most students feel that biochemistry does not have application to clinical work. The attitude and perception does not change as the students progress to clinical years.

Recommendations; The clinical relevance of the course content should be emphasized during the lessons and the biochemistry course should be reviewed and its content improved to meet the requirements of the dental students

Study benefits; will form a benchmark for future studies.

Information from this study can be used by policy makers in developing strategies to improve the attitude of students towards first year course. It will be a fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Bachelor of Dental Surgery at the UoN.
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION.

Perception is the process whereby sensory stimulation is translated into organized experience. It may be negative or positive depending on how it affects the individual. Attitude on the other hand is the psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly and Chaiken). University lecturers, teachers, doctors and other professionals in the world mention characteristics like attitude, perception, drive and actual interest as the most important student characteristics associated with successful studies. Students' attitude and perceptions towards college courses are influenced by several factors. This can be external or internal factors. The first and most obvious factor is the instructor. Previous research establishes the powerful ways instructors influence how students respond to and in a course. Drawing from work in the discipline of marketing and management, seven factors have been extrapolated that might be significant determinants of student attitude towards the course: instructor, course topic, course execution, and the room (physical environment) were the four factors that explained most variations in attitude towards a course Curran J.M.D.E 2006 (et al)

An important result is that there are significant factors, in addition to the instructor, at work shaping a student's attitude toward a class that he or she may take. The study shows that course topic has just as strong an influence on attitudes as does the instructor. The researchers point out that if the subject matter of a course influences how students relate to a course, then their level of interest ought to be acknowledged as a contributing factor on course evaluations. At this time most course evaluations focus exclusively on instructor-related variables. The student him or herself has not been found to significantly contribute toward attitude about the course. This is surprising given the emphasis some educators place on encouraging students to take ownership of their education, it is surprising to find that, overall, and this group of students do not see themselves as being instrumental in shaping their own education
experience. What the findings confirm is that students do not understand that they are at least partially responsible for what happens to them in courses. It seems to reconfirm the extremely passive orientation many students take toward knowledge acquisition.

Also surprising is the fact that other students are not seen as a factor influencing student attitudes. This means that "educators cannot assume that students will automatically appreciate the value of the diverse student population that takes a given college course together."

More studies also show that the attitude of students is also influenced by the motivations underlying the career choice. If the students are self motivated they are likely to be more passionate about the career and therefore have a positive attitude and perception than those forced by circumstances and society into the career. The rewards in the profession after the course has been completed including the salaries, chances of promotion among other rewards also influence the perception towards the course (M L Crossley & A. Mubarik).

No previous study has been done on the attitude and perception towards first courses among dental students at UoN. The aim of this study is to determine the attitude and perception of dental towards courses offered in first year. This will provide information that could be used in planning and revising the courses, as well as formulating a curriculum in which the dental students are not merely part of but are seen to be part of.
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been done on the perception and attitude of students towards the courses they do. In a study done by Anthony stokes at the Australian catholic university, "factors influencing the decision of university students to become high school teachers" and published in issues of educational research volume 17, 2007. The results showed that a salary increase of 10% would lead to 7.6% of those who did not plan to become high school teachers to plan to become teachers. In addition 15.4% of those students who responded that they were unsure would also plan to become high school teachers. University students have a variety of reasons for choosing a particular career or specifically choosing to, or not to, become a high school teacher. The reasons for becoming a teacher are not dissimilar to those found by Richardson and watt (2006).

A study by Curran, J.M. and Rosen, D.E (2006) about student attitudes towards college courses: an examination of influences and intentions found that the first and most obvious answer is the instructor. Much previous research establishes the powerful ways instructors influence the way students respond to a course. But two researchers wondered if the instructor was the only factor influencing student attitudes. Using a complex statistical model, they tested the seven factors and found that four of explained 77% of the variations in attitude towards the course: instructor, course topic, course execution and the room (physical environment).

In a study done by B. J. Moxhan and O. Plaisant on the perception of medical students towards the clinical relevance of Anatomy, published in Wiley Interscience Medical Education vol 20, issue 5, page 560-564, showed that recent developments worldwide in the medical curricula have often led to major cuts in the teaching of human anatomy. Indeed, it is perceived by some that gross (topographical) anatomy has an exaggerated importance in the initial training of doctors. The value of anatomy consequently has frequently been considerably diminished within medical curricula that have reduced factual content. To date, however, there have been no objective studies into the perceived relevance of anatomy to clinical medicine that have
aimed to quantify the attitudes of medical students. On the basis of responses to an attitude analysis questionnaire devised according to the precepts of Thurstone and Chave (The Measurement of Attitude; A Psychophysical Method and Some Experiments with a Scale for Measuring Attitude toward the Church. Chicago, IL; University of Chicago Press, [1951], they investigated the perception of medical students at Cardiff and Paris towards the importance of gross anatomy to clinical medicine. This was undertaken during the early stages of their studies (when they were newly-admitted to university and were about to commence anatomy courses), immediately after finishing their anatomy courses, and later in the final year of medical studies. The results suggest that, even where there might be geopolitical and cultural backgrounds, students at all stages of their medical course share with professional anatomists the view that anatomy is a very important subject for their clinical studies. Thus, contrary to the unquantified beliefs of those who are skeptical about the purpose and value of anatomy in an undergraduate medical curriculum, the students themselves do not appear to share such beliefs.

A survey done by EhsanUllahSyed, Mohammad Naim Et al revised in April 2007 about the attitude of Pakistan Medical students towards psychiatry as a prospective career no significant differences were found across the medical colleges between the students in age, gender, and premedical education. There was a significant difference in monthly household income. There was also a significant difference between genders for the reason to choose medicine as a career. More females cited personal interest while males cited family pressure as the reason for choosing their career path. More males considered careers other than medicine prior to entering medical school. For 7.6% of the respondents, psychiatry was the preferred career choice or highly likely choice. When this response was cross-tabulated with gender, premedical education, family income, and medical college, no statistically significant association was found. Comparing the means of ratings of various aspects of training within different medical specialties among those who rated psychiatry as their career choice, significantly more rated it very attractive or attractive in relation to lifestyle, interesting subject matter, intellectual challenge, rapid advances in understanding, having a bright future, and association with other
psychiatrists. Significantly lower numbers of students who rated psychiatry as their first choice thought it to be financially very rewarding or attractive with respect to the degree to which this specialty draws upon all aspects of medical training.

In a study done by Tracey McDowall and Beverly Jackley of Deakin University and RMIT University on What influences accounting students' attitudes towards accounting as a profession? The results show that students' perceptions of the profession related to work activities and prestige of the profession. Further analysis examining the influences on choice of an accounting major revealed three major factors: intrinsic interest in the content of accounting courses, influences of parents and friends together with perceptions of job status of accounting related to career advancement and salary. When compared with the Marriott and Marriott (2003) study, the present study showed students had more positive attitudes to studying accounting. There were however significant differences between local and international students in attitudes to the accounting profession.

In a study by Sigrun Biesenbach-Lucas about asynchronous discussion groups in teaching training classes. This paper discusses students' perceptions of an asynchronous electronic discussion assignment implemented shortly after the technology had been introduced to the university. For all students, the extension of course-related discussions outside the regular face-to-face class meetings offered benefits in the form of greater social interaction with other class members; for the non-native speakers among the students, the asynchronous discussions facilitated assimilation of course content, but it was not perceived as providing additional language practice. For all students, the two main issues perceived as negative related to their perceptions of forced, unnatural interaction promoted by the asynchronous discussions and lack of topic prompts, the requirement to make connections to prior postings, and the frequency of required contributions to discussions.