

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Classroom engagement through short stories and motivational messages

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Abstract

Objective: The objective of this study is to introduce short stories and motivational messages on soft skills in pharmacy didactic courses to improve classroom engagement. **Methods:** Surveys were then conducted on the impact of students' understanding of soft skills and their impact on classroom engagement. **Results:** The survey results from the two classes (2022 and 2023) of first year students showed that they gained an understanding of soft skills appropriately. The strategy also improved their classroom engagement and well-being. A further survey from a class of 2023 third year students indicated the strategy continued to be helpful in subsequent years. The results from students' feedback also showed that students generally appreciated the strategy, and it helped them stay positive and engaged in the classroom. **Conclusion:** Overall, the study concluded that this unique delivery of soft skill information helped students in classroom engagement and helped them learn various soft skill sets.

Introduction

The advancement of the internet and social media have significantly improved the way students learn in the classroom and small group sessions and perform their daily activities (Schrader, 2015; Cole *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, attempts have been made to use social media and virtual teaching to engage students in small group learning, laboratory courses, and clinical practices (Junco, 2014). However, social media has appeared to reduce student engagement, empathy, and communication skills (Junco, 2012; Zupanic, Rebacz, & Ehlers, 2019; Blakemore & Agllias, 2020). Moreover, the frequent use of social media has been associated with sleep deprivation, academic under-achievement, and a decreased ability to concentrate (Junco, 2012). These changes have led to the development and implementation of various "active learning" strategies that include case studies, think-pair-share, flipped classroom, self-assessments, role-playing, and jigsaw discussions for improved classroom engagement (Richards, Gorman, Scherer, & Landel, 1995; Gleason *et al.*, 2011; Wakabayashi, 2015; Hew & Lo, 2018).

Over the past decade, students have also shown altered face-to-face social skills, perhaps due to reduced social interactions (Blakemore & Agllias, 2020). In 2020-21, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of didactic classes in higher education, including pharmacy schools, were taught as virtual webinars (Twogood *et al.*, 2020). This further restricted pharmacy students from face-to-face interactions, subsequently reducing their interpersonal skills and academic engagement and causing burnout (Moreno-Fernandez *et al.*, 2020). In a recent study, several educational techniques were identified to promote improved pharmacy practice with an increased focus on soft skill development as one of the main techniques (Austin & Gregory, 2019). Similarly, many United States pharmacy colleges' curricula have adopted service-learning strategies that help refine the soft skill needed for pharmacy practice (Dicks & Mitchell, 2019). Thus, the importance of providing soft skill information among pharmacy students has been identified. In this study, information on various soft skills was introduced using short stories and motivational messages in first-year pharmacy (P1) didactic courses. The objective of this strategy was to enhance classroom

engagement and students' knowledge on soft skills related to personal management and leadership development, which may impact their performance positively.

Methods

Study population

The study was performed at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) College of Pharmacy upon approval by the UTHSC Institutional Review Board. In this study, short stories and motivational messages were introduced for 2-3 minutes at the beginning of each lecture for two courses, "Fundamentals of Drug Action (FDA)" and "Biochemistry". These classes were taught to P1 students in the fall of years 2018 (198 students), 2019 (198 students), and 2020 (177 students). The instructor, who was also the course director of the FDA course, taught approximately 20 lectures each year and introduced around the same number of motivational messages in 2018-2020. Table I provides the demography of these students.

Table I: Demographic (gender and race/ethnicity) representation of P1 students

| Demography | 2018 (Total 198) | 2019 (Total 198) | 2020 (Total 177) |
|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Gender | | | |
| Female | 81 | 66 | 64 |
| Male | 117 | 132 | 113 |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | |
| Asian | 30 | 23 | 32 |
| Black of African American | 21 | 46 | 37 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 10 | 8 | 3 |
| Two or more races | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Unknown | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| White | 129 | 117 | 99 |

Soft skill information

The short stories and motivational messages were related to learning techniques, exam performance, personal development, management, and leadership skills (Appendix A). Appendix A describes the titles of the soft skill categories, messages, and intended outcomes. The information in Appendix A was obtained from various literature documented in many self-improvements, management, and leadership books (Covey SR, 1989; Keller, 2012; Sanborn, 2017; Shane, 2013; Tracy; Travis Bradberry, 2009). In addition to soft skills, students were also introduced to the strategies of learning and retaining knowledge and effectively

preparing for exams. For this purpose, the literature (Collins, 2008) and 10-year experience of the principal investigator in learning and teaching over the past were also used. During the sessions, the instructor provided short stories and motivational messages and then asked students for take-home messages as learning outcomes.

Assessment and outcomes

Classroom survey

Students' understanding of soft skills was assessed by asking multiple-choice questions based on the desired outcomes defined in Appendix A. These surveys were conducted using Poll Everywhere™ in the next class after a given soft skill presentation. These surveys were part of classroom attendance, which is mandatory in the P1 class. Although the information on multiple soft skills was introduced, the responses of ten soft skill-related questions (Table II) were analysed from five soft skill categories that were most relevant to this study. Due to COVID-19 and the Zoom webinar lecture style, these surveys were not taken in Fall 2020. Instead, students were surveyed on whether the soft skill information that was introduced in the class helped to 1) increase classroom engagement and the overall classroom learning experience; and 2) reduce stress and anxiety and improve the "feel-good factor" and overall well-being, especially during the COVID-19 era. The options for these surveys were: A) Strongly disagree, B) Disagree, C) Neither agree nor disagree, D) Agree, and E) Strongly agree.

A follow-up survey was conducted among the entering class of 2019 during their P3 year to assess the long-term benefit of the soft skill information. This survey included four questions: 1) The philosophies and strategies taught on "Learning and retaining knowledge and improving performance in exams" during the P1 year also helped you in subsequent years; 2) The philosophies and strategies taught on "Personal and organisational skills" during the P1 year also helped you in subsequent years; 3) The philosophies and strategies taught on "Time/activity management" during the P1 year also helped you in subsequent years, and 4) The philosophies and strategies taught on "Self-management and leadership" during the P1 year course also helped you in subsequent years. The options for these questions were: A) Strongly disagree, B) Disagree, C) Neither agree nor disagree, D) Agree, and E) Strongly agree.

Students' feedback on instructor's performance

Finally, the impact of the introduction of soft skill information was assessed using student feedback on the instructor at the end of the course. Qualitative feedback from students from 2018-20 related to the introduction

of the soft skill information through short stories and motivational messages was collected and analysed (Appendix B).

Statistical analysis

The survey data for the soft skill strategies presented in Figure 1 have been summarised based upon frequencies of responses. The survey data presented in Figures 2 and 3, which are summarised based upon the frequency of responses, were further analysed. For the Likert scale, each option was assigned a number, i.e., strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). Means and standard deviations (SD) were calculated and used to compare to the respective control groups as described in the table. Independent samples t-test or one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparison test were used to determine p-values in both tables and figures. The $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant. All the statistical calculations were performed using GraphPad Prism 7 (GraphPad Software, La Jolla, CA, USA).

Results

Analysis of the response to soft skill information presented to P1 (2018-2019) (Figure 1)

Since the questions were used as part of attendance, the response rate for the surveys was ~95% of the class size.

Soft skill #1: Learning and retaining knowledge

As presented in Figure 1 A-B, responses to both questions were consistent with the training as detailed in Appendix A. Approximately 80% of students chose option D for both questions, which were consistent in both years 2018 and 2019, indicating that the majority of students understood the strategies for learning and retaining knowledge.

Soft skill #2: Performance on examination

Approximately 80% of students chose option D for the question asked in Figure 1C, and about 90% chose option C for the question asked in Figure 1D. The response options for both the questions were similar in both years 2018 and 2019, which was consistent with the soft skill training, as described in Appendix A, indicating that students likely understood the strategies for better performance in the exam.

Soft skill #3: Personal and organisational success

Consistent with the soft skill information (Appendix A), in 2018, 60-70% of students identified the practice of teamwork as the most effective strategy to succeed in any endeavour (Figure 1E-F, options D and A, respectively). The percentage of students who identified teamwork as the most effective strategy for success in 2019 increased by approximately 10%.

Soft skill #4: Activity and time management

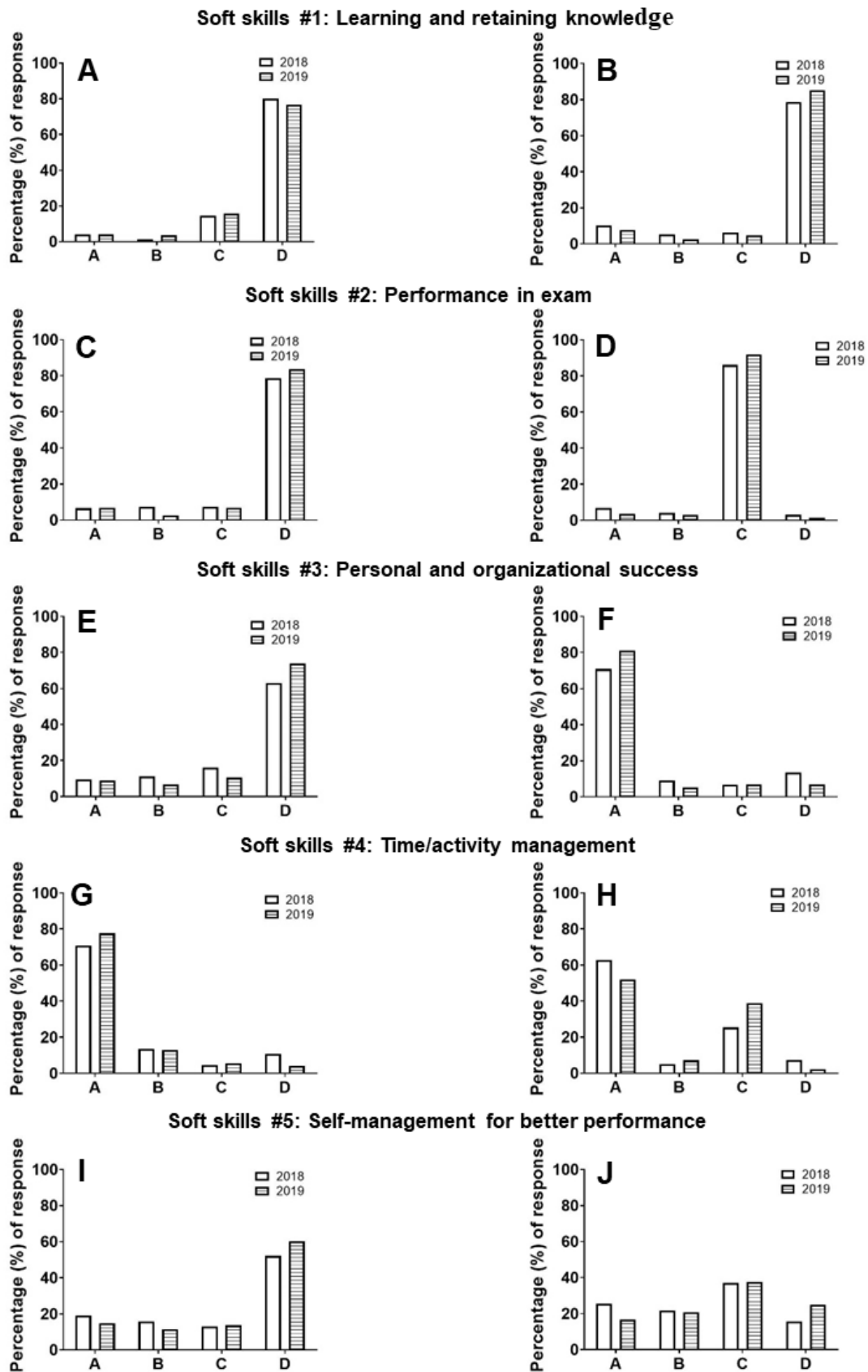
After introducing the soft skill for time and activity management (Appendix A), around 70% and 80% of students selected option A (Figure 1G) in 2018 and 2019, respectively, consistent with the information provided in the classroom. For the question in Figure 1H, 50-60% and 25-40% of students chose options A and C, respectively.

Soft skill #5: Self-management for better performance

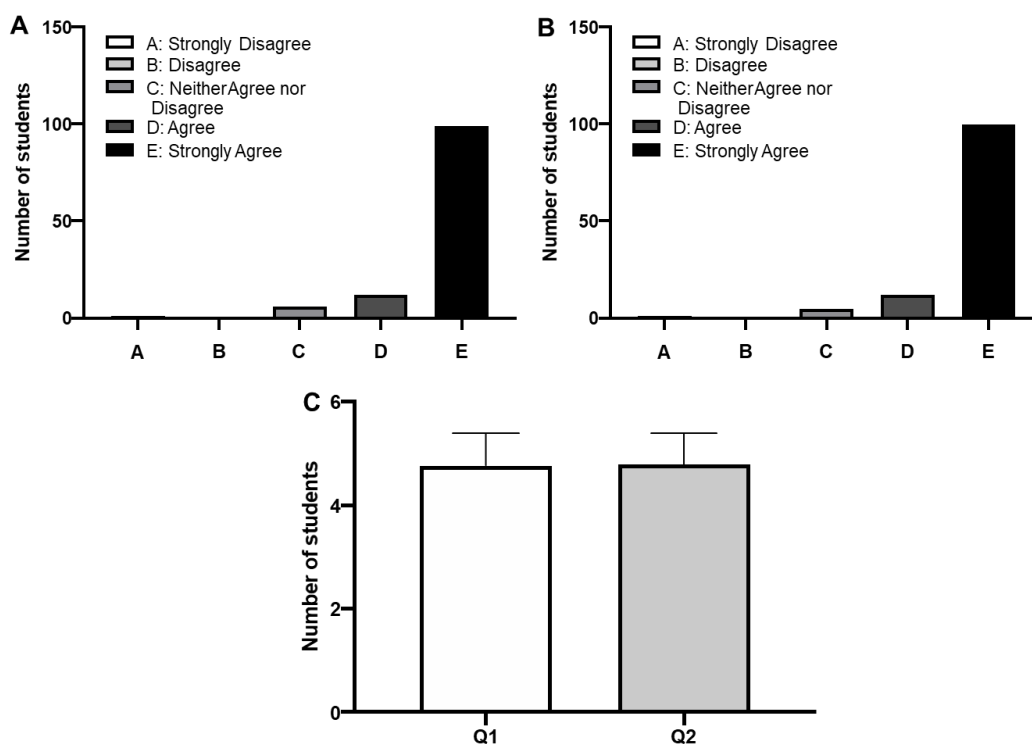
Upon discussing the importance of attitude over action, results, and discipline, 50-60% of students believed that attitude is what matters most (Figure 1I). However, in the case of the potential principles (thinking, performing, reflecting, and learning) for gaining knowledge, the choice of students was almost distributed equally among these four principles (Figure 1J). This result was expected as everyone's learning style is different.

Students' response to the impact of the soft skill information on classroom engagement and well-being

Due to the inability to do similar surveys on soft skill training in fall 2020, the impact of the soft skill information (provided through short stories and motivational messages) on classroom engagement/classroom learning experience and well-being, especially during the COVID-19 era, were surveyed. Of the 177 students from the Class of 2024, 118 (66.7%) responded (Figure 2). Among the responders, 11 (9%) students selected "agree" and 102 (86%) "strongly agree" to both survey items: 1) soft skill training helped increase classroom engagement and overall classroom learning experience, and 2) soft skill training helped reduce stress and anxiety and improve the "feel-good factor" and overall well-being, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 2A-B shows no significant difference between the response to the two questions (Figure 2C, Q1 vs Q2). Overall, the results suggest that the strategy had a similar impact on both classroom engagement/learning experience and well-being.



Note: The questions for each category and their respective options, with the most appropriate responses, are presented in Table II
Figure 1: Responses to soft skill related questions to P1 students in 2018 (class of 2022) and 2019 (class of 2023)



A. Soft skill training was given through motivational messages/stories at the beginning of each class. This helped increase classroom engagement and the overall classroom learning experience. B. Soft skill training was given through motivational messages/stories at the beginning of each class. This helped reduce stress and anxiety and improve the “feel-good factor” and overall well-being, especially during the COVID-19 era. C. Data analysis of responses to the two questions (A-B) as described in the method section.

Figure 2: Responses to the following questions to P1 students in 2020 (class of 2024)

Follow up study on students’ response on the impact of the introduction of the soft skill information

Follow-up surveys were conducted among the class of 2023 (P1 of 2019) during their P3 year to study the effectiveness of the soft skill information that was introduced during their P1 year. Of 198 students, 46 (23%) responded to the survey (Figure 3). Among responders, 39 (85%), 42 (91%), 42 (91%), and 41 (89%) students selected “agree or strongly agree” to survey questions 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. The remaining students responded “neither agree nor disagree”, except one student, who responded “disagree” to Q1. The findings suggest that students perceive the soft skill training given to the class of 2023 students as helpful in the subsequent years on 1) Learning and retaining knowledge and improving performance in exams, 2) Personal and organisational skills, 3) Time/activity management, and 4) Self-management and leadership. As expected, the data analysis of the surveys in Figure 3A-D showed no significant difference in student responses between the four questions (Figure 3E Q1 vs Q2 vs Q3 vs Q4).

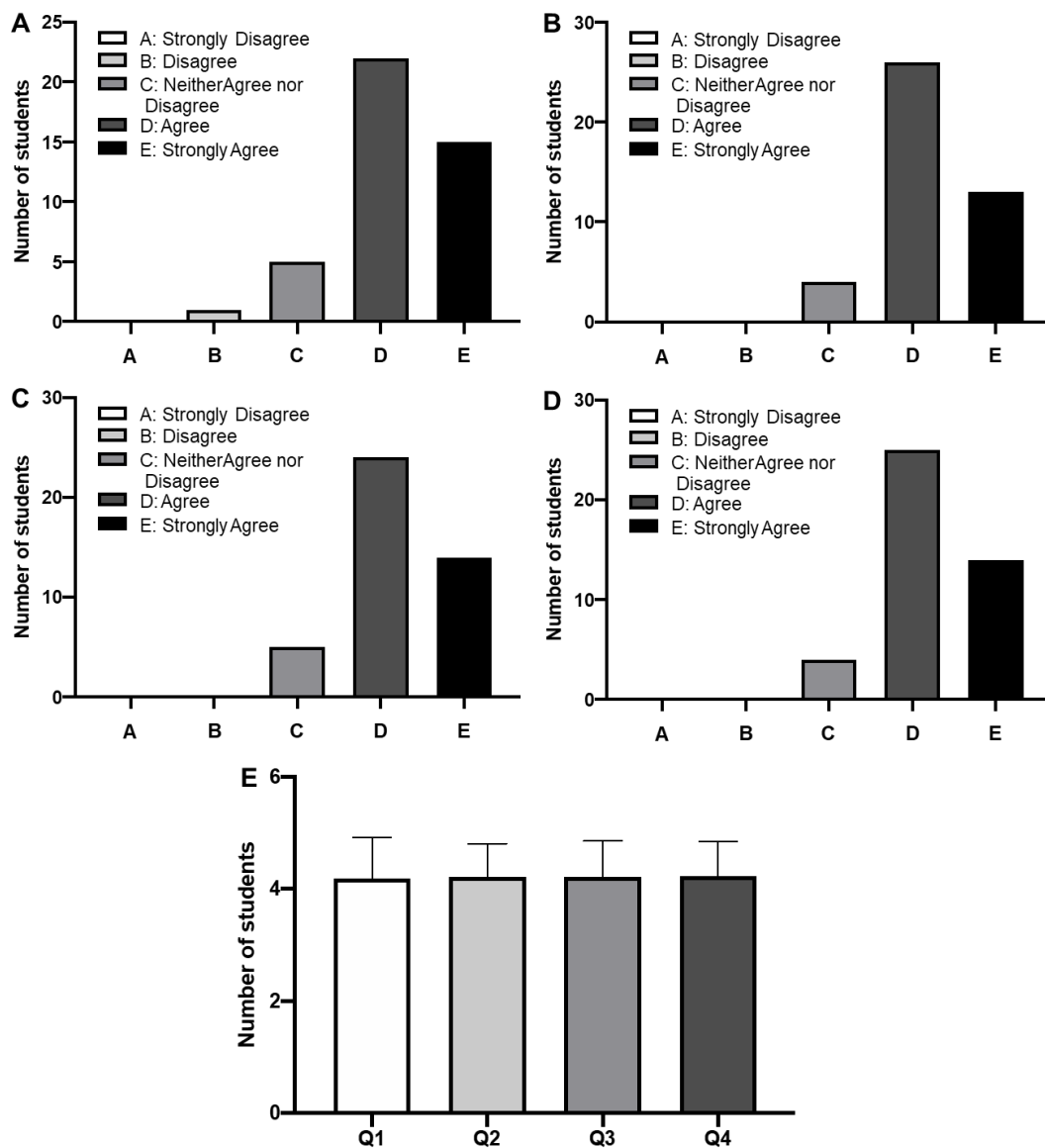
Assessment of students’ feedback on instructor’s performance

Students’ written qualitative feedback that relates to

the soft skill information provided through short stories and motivational messages for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020 in FDA and Biochemistry courses is presented in Appendix B. Written feedback percentages were 22% in 2018, 30% in 2019, and 28% in 2020. Almost all feedback was positive, suggesting that students liked this strategy and learned from the soft skill information (Appendix B).

Discussion

Engaging students in didactic courses through various strategies, especially in pharmacy education, where the average class size is >100 students, is critical to improving the classroom experience (Gleason *et al.*, 2011; Wakabayashi, 2015; Hew & Lo, 2018; AACP, 2021). Over the years, various active learning strategies have been used in didactic courses and have had a positive impact on student learning (Stewart *et al.*, 2011). Active learning strategies improved student knowledge, critical thinking, self-confidence in problem-solving, and exam performance, thus facilitating the transition of student learning from the classroom to the real-world (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2021).



A. The philosophies and strategies taught on “Learning and retaining knowledge and improving performance in exams” during the P1 year helped you in subsequent years. B. The philosophies and strategies taught on “Personal and organisational skills” during the P1 year helped you in subsequent years. C. The philosophies and strategies taught on “Time/activity management” during the P1 year helped you in subsequent years. D. The philosophies and strategies taught on “Self-management and leadership” during the P1 year in FDA course helped you in subsequent years. E. Data analysis of the four questions (A-D) as described in the method section.

Figure 3: Responses to the following questions in a follow-up survey to P3 students (class of 2023)

In this study, a non-traditional strategy was presented using the introduction of soft skill information through short stories and motivational messages to enhance classroom engagement, then classroom engagement and understanding of the soft skills concept were assessed. The results suggest that students who are generally more engaged in the classroom are more likely to have improved learning outcomes. In a follow-up survey during their P3 year, the Class of 2023 reported ongoing positive effects of the soft skill information they learned two years ago as P1 students.

They perceived that the information had a long-lasting effect in every soft skill area, i.e., learning and retaining knowledge, personal and organisational skills, time management, self-management, and leadership. Soft skill information was introduced on personal, social, organisational, time and/or activity management, and leadership skills. These concepts are essential in shaping the personality of individuals and helping them maintain a growth mindset that leads to improved emotional intelligence and academic achievements (Han et al., 2018; Sisk et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2019). A

growth mindset is crucial to developing an attitude of life-long learning, especially in health fields where professionals constantly try to improve the patient experience. An improved emotional intelligence in terms of procedural learning and social engagement through a growth mindset is also paramount to enhancing the patient experience (Han *et al.*, 2018; Cook *et al.*, 2019). The findings of this study suggest that students understand and appreciate the importance of soft skill concepts and implement these skills to enhance their performance. Although not common in the health science or pharmacy profession, soft skill training is desirable in management programmes and improves the marketability of students (Nealy, 2005).

In the last couple of decades, many pharmacy colleges and schools have introduced lectures or elective courses on leadership as part of their pharmacy programme (Bradley-Baker & Murphy, 2013; Patterson *et al.*, 2013; Feller, Doucette & Witry, 2016;). They introduced self-management, team dynamics, and motivation as part of the leadership course. Some pharmacy schools and colleges have also introduced dual degree programmes with a PharmD/MBA and/or a separate leadership certificate course (Cabanilla & Sarangarm, 2018; Salmon & Fan, 2019). Students enrolled in these programmes did better academically than their counterparts, had a high level of satisfaction with the programme (Chumney & Ragucci, 2006), and were more competitive in the job market (Jacobs *et al.*, 2017), while those who only completed the PharmD programme did not have the same level of soft skill training. Thus, introducing the soft skill information in this study has likely educated pharmacy students in this study on the basic concepts of personal and social awareness and management, and perhaps leadership skills, which could prepare them better for future employment.

Many factors are known to affect student performance, such as instructor knowledge of the topic and ability to teach, subject materials, student background in the subject, and others. However, the results of this study showed an association of student exam performance with the introduction of soft skill information to P1 students (2018-20) compared to 2017, when this strategy was not used. The average class scores of the P1 students (2018-20) were increased by 3% compared to average class scores in 2017 (88.7±10.2% vs 85.7±12.4%). These findings suggest that the introduction of soft skill information through motivational messages may have had a positive impact on student grades, probably due to improved classroom engagement. Furthermore, the information provided on the concepts of learning and retaining knowledge (Table II and Figure 1) for improved exam

performance could also contribute, at least in part, to their improved exam performance.

Student evaluations are commonly used in examining the teaching performance of instructors for further improvement of teaching quality in pharmacy, especially clinical pharmacy (Love, Heller & Parker, 1982). Upon implementing this strategy, students generally evaluated the instructor much more positively using both quantitative and qualitative feedback (data not shown). More specifically, students provided very positive feedback on the introduction of soft skill information through short stories and motivational messages (Appendix B). Although there may be other factors that helped improve the students' evaluation of the instructor, this strategy also appears to contribute, at least to some extent.

Short stories and motivational messages in public speaking have historically been shown to be impactful to audiences, especially in settings such as a seminar or conferences (Bigman *et al.*, 2019). However, this strategy is rarely used in the classroom setting. It is expected that the use of short stories and motivational messages in the classroom positively impacts student engagement. It can also improve their communication, management, leadership skills, and emotional intelligence. The strategy in this study on the soft skill information included various concepts on improving emotional intelligence, e.g. self-management (Appendix A). The implementation of soft skill training of any kind that improves emotional intelligence is essential in healthcare professions, particularly among pharmacists (Arora *et al.*, 2010). A study performed at the University of Oklahoma showed an increase in Emotional Intelligence Appraisal scores among three cohorts of pharmacy students who were also enrolled in a leadership degree option programme (Smith *et al.*, 2018). The study concluded that emotional intelligence has the potential to build leadership capacity that can be applied in healthcare delivery settings.

Due to COVID-19, didactic classes of college students at UTHSC, including pharmacy students, were virtual using Zoom. Studies have shown that in addition to frontline healthcare professions and individuals directly affected by COVID-19 (Pappa *et al.*, 2020; Spoorthy, Pratapa & Mahant, 2020), college students also struggled with their well-being due to virtual classes (Naser *et al.*, 2020; Son *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, providing an additional experience of webinars is essential to bridge the gap between the virtual and classroom experience. To some extent, the soft skill information through short stories and motivational messages provides a unique experience that helps students feel better. The results of this study revealed that over 90% of students agreed that the strategy

reduced their stress and anxiety and improved the “feel-good factor” and overall well-being. This outcome is noteworthy and consistent with the findings of a recent study among basic science researchers and graduate students (Kumar *et al.*, 2020). The study results showed an improvement in the well-being and productivity in the intervention group compared to the control group.

Study limitations

This study has some limitations, although the strategy of introducing soft skill information through short stories and motivational messages seemed to impact student engagement, performance, and well-being positively. First, this strategy did not directly measure student exam performance. Future research should directly correlate exam performance with the introduction of this strategy. Second, Brigg’s personality type and Emotional Intelligence Appraisal were not measured before students joined the programme and after they graduated. Also, no surveys were performed on whether this strategy helped improve student emotional intelligence. A follow-up study is warranted, considering this limitation. Although the assessment of soft skills and their impact on classroom engagement and subsequent years did not always match the same cohort, this study is a blend of both cross-sectional (Figure 1 vs Figure 2) and longitudinal (Figure 1 vs Figure 3) designs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this unique, unconventional classroom learning strategy used soft skill information through short stories and motivational messages and improved student knowledge of soft skills, classroom engagement, and perhaps exam performance.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no disclosures or any conflict of interest.

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Appendix A: Short messages and stories and their intended outcomes that belong to different aspects of soft skill training

| Soft skill categories | Messages and stories | Intended outcomes |
|---|--|---|
| Psychological Self-management | Conscious vs. Subconscious mind | This message helps students understand neuro-linguistic programming of subconscious mind that subsequently leads to work effectively. |
| Psychological and Physiological Self-management | Sickness vs. Wellness "Psychoneuroimmunology" | This message helps prevent mental sickness or stress by being positive and motivating, and by regularly doing yoga, meditation, exercise, and walking/running. |
| Psychological Self-management | Self-learning from reflection | This message helps students to understand they can succeed again by reflecting on their previous activities that helped them succeed previously. |
| Communication, Collaboration, Social interaction | "Teamwork makes a dream work." -A Chinese proverb | Emphasizing Teamwork (Together Everyone Achieves More) by an "Extended hare and tortoise" story help students to be more collaborative and develop an attitude to work as a team. |
| Psychological Leadership | Philosophies/techniques for life-long learning | A message on learning something new every day and discovering our self, by reading success story of others, is the key to life-long learning |
| Self-management Leadership | Activity and time management; A story from a book, <i>Eat that Frog</i> , by Brian Tracy Leadership lessons from Eagle | A message on how to prioritize an important task before it becomes urgent is the key to time management. Lessons from Eagle, e.g., overcoming challenges, reinventing oneself, separating from the masses by going the extra mile, and leading by example, help students to acquire leadership skills. |
| Leadership Management | Lessons from Geese! | The V-formation of geese while flying teaches students important lessons on teamwork, leadership, care, and empathy. |
| Psychological Leadership and Self-management | The Power of Hope A story from a book, <i>Making Hope Happen</i> , by Dr. Shane Lopez | A message on having a hope has the potential to enhance success by 15%, which could be the edge that can take students to the next level/grade. |
| Psychological Leadership and Self-management | Power of possibility thinking and positive attitude "Nothing is Impossible, even the word says I'MPossible" | Helps students believe that possibility thinking can help achieve anything. |
| Psychological Leadership and Self-management | The power of expectation, belief, and positive attitude | This story helps students believe people don't get what they deserve, but rather they get what they expect with positive attitude. So, always expect the best outcomes and be prepared to learn from the worst outcome. |
| Self-management | A story from an unknown source "GPS (Gift, Passion, and Strength)" | The message helps students discover their own GPS that may help in choosing and building their career. |
| Psychological Self-management | Positive attitude. From a story, "Shoe company and an isolated island" | This story helps students to acquire right attitude and see the positive in every situation. |
| Psychological Self-management | The power of written goal A study from the Harvard University | This study helps students understand that writing a goal, not just conceiving in the head, can increase the chance for success by many-fold. |
| Self-management, Psychological | Intelligent quotient (IQ) vs. Emotional quotient (EQ) Vs. Attitudinal quotient (AQ) | This message helps students understand that EQ and AQ are equally, if not more important, than IQ, and can be acquired/learned. |
| Self-management Psychological and Social management | You become based on your Genetics (DNA), Epigenetics (the effect of environment on genes), and neuroepigenetics (epigenetic changes that affect the nervous system) | This message helps students understand that epigenetics and neuroepigenetics are more important than our DNA, and they can be nurtured by providing optimal environment, association, and inspiration. |

Appendix B: Students' written feedback of FDA and Biochemistry in 2018, 2019, and 2020 that relates to soft skill training (presented as verbatim).

Autumn 2018, Total response: 58, response related to the soft skill training: 13

Positive response (12)

I appreciated his philosophical intros before each class and found that I really missed his teaching once he was not regularly teaching each lecture.

Easily one of my favorite professors. Really engaging and inspiring.

His inspirational stories for each lecture were very motivational and should definitely be continued.

Really enjoyed how he took a few minutes out of lecture to teach us a life lesson.

His motivational speeches prior to lectures really impacted me thank you!

Dr. Kumar came into class every day with a smile on his face and a motivational word to share.

I loved his motivational quotes and stories that he would always tell in the beginning.

Life lessons were motivational and felt like this instructor really cares for his students' growth.

His "life lessons" slides in each lecture brought light to our longer days.

Also, his motivational lessons at the start of class always were appreciated.

His life lessons that started every lecture were really entertaining and helpful.

I found myself looking forward to Dr. Kumar's lectures because he starts his lectures with a motivational speech.

Negative response (1)

Some of his positive lecture stories were too long for my taste.

Autumn 2019, Total response: 42, response related to the soft skill training: 13

Positive response (13)

He is open to questions and engages the class through questions placed in the lectures as well as through his motivational speeches at the beginning.

Always spends time on well-being topics and seems to truly care

Very clear, loved the inspirational words of wisdom

Dr. Kumar is always so uplifting and happy to teach.

Love the stories at beginning of class.

He is so motivational and always positive. I really enjoy the life lessons I receive before start of his lectures.

I look forward for his motivational story at the beginning of the lecture.

Dr. Kumar handled time really well, his material was concise and straightforward, and his motivational talks were uplifting.

Beginning lectures on a positive note with stories were always uplifting.

More life lessons please!

Most uplifting and positive professor!

I always look forward to his lecture.

and specially his motivation stories.

Appreciated the motivational topics at the beginning of each lecture.

Negative response (0)

Autumn 2020, Total response: 109, response related to the soft skill training: 30

Positive response (28)

Always gave positive lectures and uplifted students during lectures. Great teacher!

Absolutely love the life lessons at the beginning of the lecture, very unique and helpful.

I really like how he starts each class with a positive note.

Like the inspirational stories and quotes.

I loved the inspirational opening in the lectures, really helped to set the tone.

I enjoyed the stories before every class.

I loved his encouraging stories before we started the lecture.

His inspirational messages put me in a good mindset to learn and in a way prepared me and encouraged me through learning the material.

He began each lecture with a motivating story which helped me get through the day.

He always had an encouraging message or story at the beginning of each class that was meant to inspire us to be better versions of ourselves. he also offers motivation and encouragement needed at times. This semester was incredibly stressful, and Dr. Kumar provided positivity that was beneficial.

The instructor was always encouraging, and the motivational stories at the beginning of his lectures significantly helped, especially during the virtual learning format.

The course intros regarding wisdom and life made this very enjoyable.

He also provided uplifting messages in the beginning of lectures that motivated us to learn.

I loved the positivity that was built into every lecture. The brief talk before every class about some life theme really promoted a positive environment and made the day better.

Autumn 2020, Total response: 109, response related to the soft skill training: 30 (con't)

I love that Dr. Kumar always starts off lectures with inspiration.

He helped me a lot to be positive and I enjoyed his morning before class positivity point.

I loved the inspirational messages before the lectures. They were exactly what we needed.

I enjoy his teaching at the beginning of class each day.

The stories to begin the lecture are great.

Always engaged well with students and provided words of encouragement and success.

He always began his lectures with some inspirational story.

I loved all of the stories that he told before every lecture, they gave me the bit of inspiration that I needed to keep going, even when times were tough!

He always starts his lecture with something positive.

Loved his pre-lecture spiels; it was something unique no professor has ever done before.

Loved the motivational speeches in the beginning of lecture.

love his life lessons/advice before each lecture.

Negative response (2)

Active learning was not always beneficial and not as involving mostly due to zoom.

As nice as his talks are at the beginning of class, it might be better to just get right into the material.
