

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Sense of belonging in Family Medicine residents**Ricardo Lorenzo Mora-Betancourt¹**  , **Nuris Nilda Almaguer-Cruz²** 

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the sense of belonging constitutes the relationship of identification that members of the educational community, especially students, have with the institution they attend.

Objective: to determine the sense of belonging of resident physicians in Family Medicine in the municipality of Cacocum.

Methods: an observational, descriptive, cross-sectional research was developed in Cacocum municipality, Holguín province, Cuba, in the period from June 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024. The universe included 33 resident physicians in Family Medicine. For the selection of the sample, a non-probabilistic intentional sampling was carried out, finally it was constituted by 22 resident physicians, who gave their consent to participate in the study. Reliability was obtained by calculating Cronbach's Alpha, in the SPSS Program for Windows version 25.

Results: the global evaluation of the sense of belonging observed was predominantly at the medium level with a total of 10 resident physicians, followed by the low level with a total of eight resident physicians. Regarding the evaluations according to dimensions, the highest values were observed in the low level of the social dimension; medium level of the academic dimension and low level of the physical dimension.

Conclusions: family Medicine residents presented a medium level of sense of belonging at the expense of the social, academic and physical dimensions.

Keywords: Attitude; Internship and Residency; Family Practice; Belonging.

INTRODUCTION

The sense of belonging (SB) constitutes the relationship of identification that members of the educational community, especially students, have with the institution they attend.^(1,2) Placeres Hernández JF et al.,⁽³⁾ conceptualize SB as a category of the responsibility value in medical training, which represents the quality of personality that implies freedom to decide and act assuming the consequences derived from actions.

In the last decade, interest has grown in measuring SB, above all due to its influence on the subjective well-being of students. Thus, the quality of the bond between student and school has become a substantial part of the approaches oriented to evaluate personal and social development in school stages.⁽¹⁾

This feeling of affiliation is attributed positive characteristics for school trajectory, life satisfaction, confidence and predisposition towards learning, which is why it has been actively incorporated into educational management and measurement policies.⁽¹⁾

There are four dimensions that influence or determine SB in an educational institution: the social psychological, affective, physical and academic.⁽⁴⁾

The social-psychological dimension is what signifies in students feeling secure about themselves, valued, needed and significant within a group or system. Likewise, it includes the processes of development of social competence that enables human beings to interact significantly with others, to develop affective bonds and build lasting relationships that will propitiate group integration and social cohesion. The affective dimension refers to feeling part of a group or an institution, and generates with it scopes that allow students to establish relationships of fidelity, trust, feelings of identity and security.

The third dimension is the physical one, and is constituted by the influence of the physical environment in its construction. This dimension is formed by the behavioral and symbolic interaction processes that are verified between people and the physical environment. It is characterized by providing pleasant and stimulating environments that offer opportunities to develop skills and to build memorable personal or collective experiences.

Finally, the academic dimension is defined as the *raison d'être* of universities. These must provide their students with professional training under quality parameters, pre-established ethical principles in their philosophy. This academic training supposes a curricular and organizational structure that coordinates contents and didactic strategies within an environment conducive to the good development of teaching-learning processes.⁽⁴⁾

Cacocum municipality presents an increase in abandonment of the residency regime in residents of the Family Medicine specialty, for diverse reasons; the need to design strategies that contribute to the retention and increase the quality of the graduate from SB and its dimensions, was what motivated the development of the present study. Objective. To determine the sense of belonging of resident physicians in Family Medicine in the municipality of Cacocum.

METHODS

An observational, descriptive, cross-sectional research was developed in Cacocum municipality, Holguín province, Cuba, in the period from June 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024.

The universe included 33 resident physicians in Family Medicine. The sample was constituted by 22 resident physicians, obtained through a non-probabilistic intentional sampling. The participants gave their consent to participate in the study.

Inclusion criterion:

Voluntariness to participate in the study.

Exclusion criteria:

Resident physician who was on temporary leave.

Resident physician without access to the WhatsApp digital platform.

Resident physician whose questionnaire was incomplete and/or with incorrect answers.

Operational design of the variable:

Sense of belonging of resident physicians in Family Medicine: qualitative ordinal dependent variable, evaluated according to score obtained in the questionnaire and measured in:

- Low level: less than 70
- Medium level: 70 – 89.9
- High level: 90 and more

To determine the global evaluation, the scores of each item of the questionnaire were summed and the percentage was calculated based on a maximum of 76 points to obtain.

In the case of the evaluation according to dimensions, the scores of each item of the dimension were summed and the percentage was calculated based on a maximum of 32 points to obtain in dimension 1; 12 points in dimension 2; 16 points in dimension 3 and 16 points in dimension 4. Dimensions of the variable: dimension 1 (Affective), dimension 2 (Social), dimension 3 (Academic), dimension 4 (Physical)

The theoretical methods used were: analysis-synthesis and induction-deduction. Among the empirical methods, the use of the Questionnaire to evaluate the sense of belonging in resident physicians.⁽⁵⁾ applied to resident physicians in Family Medicine was resorted to, virtually with the use of the WhatsApp digital platform and the objective of determining SB, from self-perception.

Statistical methods: Reliability was obtained by calculating Cronbach's Alpha, in the SPSS Program for Windows version 25.⁽⁶⁾

The value of Cronbach's Alpha was interpreted according to Pérez León G.⁽⁷⁾
The Ethical Principles for Medical Research were taken into account.⁽⁸⁾

RESULTS

The evaluated instrument showed high reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging between 0,787 and 0,934. In the affective ($\alpha = 0,866$), social ($\alpha = 0,826$) and physical ($\alpha = 0,815$) dimensions, good internal consistency is observed, while the academic dimension ($\alpha = 0,787$) reaches acceptable consistency, which suggests adequate homogeneity among the items. In general, the complete instrument registers a Cronbach's Alpha of 0,934, which indicates excellent internal consistency and confirms that the items used reliably and coherently measure the dimensions of the evaluated construct.

Fig. 1 shows the distribution of the global evaluation of SB, where a predominance of the medium level was observed with a total of 10 resident physicians (45,45 %), followed by the high level with a total of 8 resident physicians for 36,36 %.

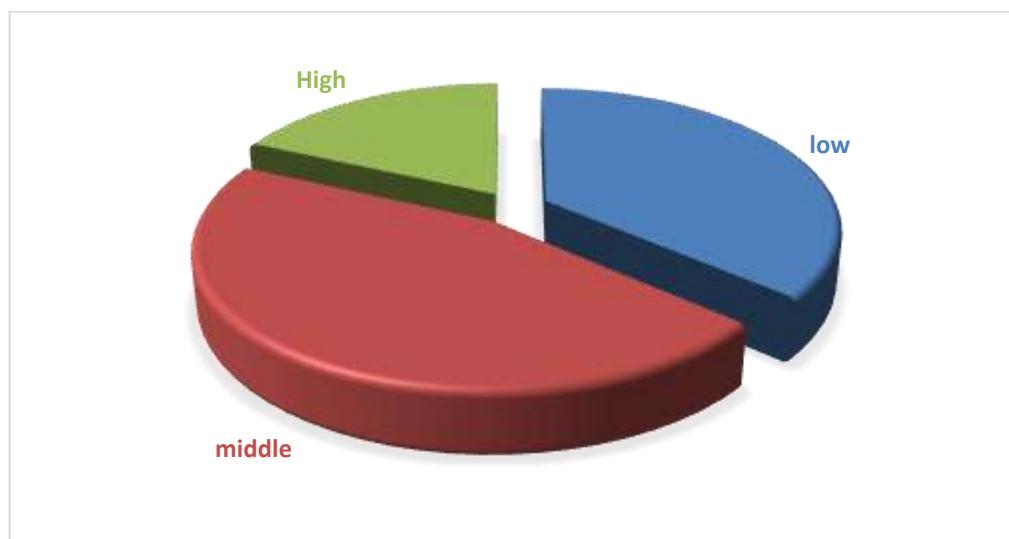


Fig. 1 Global evaluation of the sense of belonging.

Regarding the evaluations according to dimensions, the highest values were observed in the low level of the social dimension; medium level of the academic dimension and low level of the physical dimension (Fig 2).

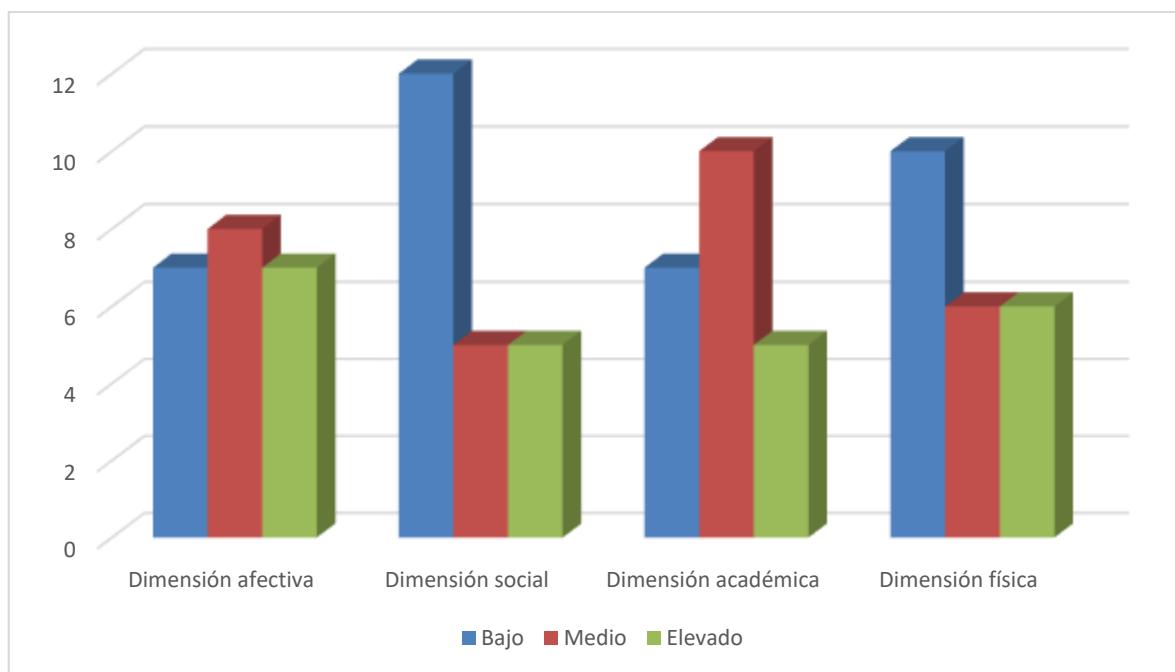


Fig. 2 Evaluations according to dimensions.

DISCUSSION

The authors agree with Fuentes Cardona MG,⁽⁹⁾ in that WhatsApp has replaced traditional communication channels and despite detractors, it has become an official medium to circulate all types of information.

Colmenares Sancho F et al.,⁽¹⁰⁾ have demonstrated that the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool in medical teaching, proved indispensable during the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing immediacy, greater linkage with the professor, personalized learning and exchange of information in diverse formats.

It is the authors' criterion that, the wide use of this platform has favored the development of academic and research activities, due to its friendly interface, the ease of its use and the possibility of circulating multimedia information, rapidly, to a large number of people and exchanging extensively; reason why the authors of the present investigation decided to use it to survey the study sample.

The social integration of students fosters SB, which has allowed predicting permanence in studies, because when students do not feel that they belong to a social environment, the probability of abandoning their studies is high, with SB to the career being a significant predictor of motivation to abandon.⁽¹¹⁾

The above statement is closely related to the results obtained, in which the low level of SB predominated in the social dimension. The authors consider that this aspect is negatively influencing the teaching-learning process in medical residency in the municipality, since until the study period more definitive leaves from the residency regime have been granted compared to the same stage of the previous year; permanence being one of the most sensitive aspects in the evaluation of the teaching process.

A study conducted by Corona A,⁽⁴⁾ in students of the Bachelor's Degree in Dance at the Mexican BUAP, in which the same instrument used in the present investigation was applied, coincides with the results of the present study, in obtaining a lower valuation by the students in the social dimension.

The predominant internal consistency was good according to dimensions and the instrument presented excellent internal consistency. The values obtained and their interpretation coincide with other authors.^(12,13,14,15)

In the authors' judgment these results evidence the reliability of the instrument and the quality of the information it provides. The information provided by the present study will allow designing strategies that contribute to permanence and increase the quality of the graduate from SB and its dimensions.

CONCLUSIONS

The Family Medicine residents presented a medium level of sense of belonging at the expense of the social, academic and physical dimensions.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this study.

Authors' Contributions

RLMB: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Research, Methodology, Project Management, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Original Draft, Drafting and Editing.

NNAC: Conceptualization, Research, Methodology, Resources, Original Draft.

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