0732 Dental Students' Behavioral Styles as Predictors of Future Management Skills

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All of us have developed behavioral styles—distinct ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Few investigations have considered dental students’ behavioral styles as a predictor of how they might manage a future dental team. Objective: The purpose of this five year study was to identify junior dental students’ behavioral styles as predictors of their future management skills of a dental staff. Methods: During the spring semester of the junior year, all dental students are enrolled in a required dental practice management course. From 1998-2002, 328 students (56% male; 44% female) completed the Personal Profile System (DiSC), a self-administered, self-developing instrument. The Personal Profile System is designed to help the individual understand self and others in a specific environment. The instrument consists of 28 items designed to categorize the individual into one of four behavioral styles—Dominance (D), Influencing (i), Steady (S), and Cautious (C). The instrument then provides more in-depth, individual analysis of their style. After students’ completed the instrument, discussion followed concerning staff management. Results: Thirty percent of the students scored highest as C’s; 29% as i’s; 22% as S’s; and 19% as D’s. Female students scored highest as i’s, 34%, followed by C’s, 26%. Male students scored highest as C’s, 34%, followed by i’s, 25%. “Classical patterns” are identified by interpreting the plotting points across the four categories (D,i,S,C). The Perfectionist pattern was the most frequent (18%) followed by Creative (13%). No one particular behavioral style predominated the five classes of students. Although the "Dominance" style is typically associated with leaders, fewer students exhibited a tendency for the style. More students were in the "Perfectionist" classical pattern than the other patterns. Conclusions: This area of research may help dental students predict their future management styles and learn how to work with different behavioral types for enhanced effectiveness.

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