

Abstract

The purpose of this survey research is to provide introductory data concerning social justice perceptions among Communication Sciences and Disorders students. Recent efforts include identifying how professions develop and implement equitable practices, such as human rights and social inclusion tactics in terms of race, gender, class, disability, geography, sexuality, and language. Although these efforts take root in the professional realm, such issues could be introduced earlier. Current research does not adequately address current students' understanding of social justice in the health professions. For that reason, the current study collected quantitative data that reflects knowledge and opinions related to social justice in Texas A&M University-Kingsville (TAMUK) students majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSDO), a major that leads to employment as a speech-language pathology assistant or, with graduate work, a speech-language pathologist. The results of this study will benefit the decision-making of whether social justice should be introduced to students before heading into the professional realm. By participating in this study, participants will gain a better understanding of their self-social justice perceptions. The data collected from this study will help higher education administrators understand where Communication Sciences and Disorders students stand on social justice and whether it should be implemented earlier in their academic studies.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research study is to investigate communication sciences and disorders (CSDO), a major that leads to employment as a speech-language pathology assistant or, with graduate work, a speech-language pathologist, students' perspectives on social justice in order to determine whether it should be implemented earlier in their academic studies of their preprofessional careers.

METHODS

Study design

- A non-experimental quantitative descriptive study approach was administrated for this study.

Participants

- A total of 23 graduate students participated in the study (n=23). All students were in the Master of Science (M.S) program in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

Methods

- The survey questionnaire consisted of 23 questions regarding social justice in a speech-language pathologist/assistance practice that were modified from Unger et al. (2021). Respondents answered multiple choice questions, yes/no questions, and Likert scale questions. The first question included the online consent form, and the following 2 questions asked participants for their student identification number, course number, and classification.

METHODS, cont.

Procedure

- After receiving IRB approval from Research Compliance at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, CSDO professors were contacted to recruit possible participants. Once professors agreed, students were sent a link to the questionnaire on Survey Monkey via email.
- Students received extra credit towards a course they were enrolled in at the time for their participation.

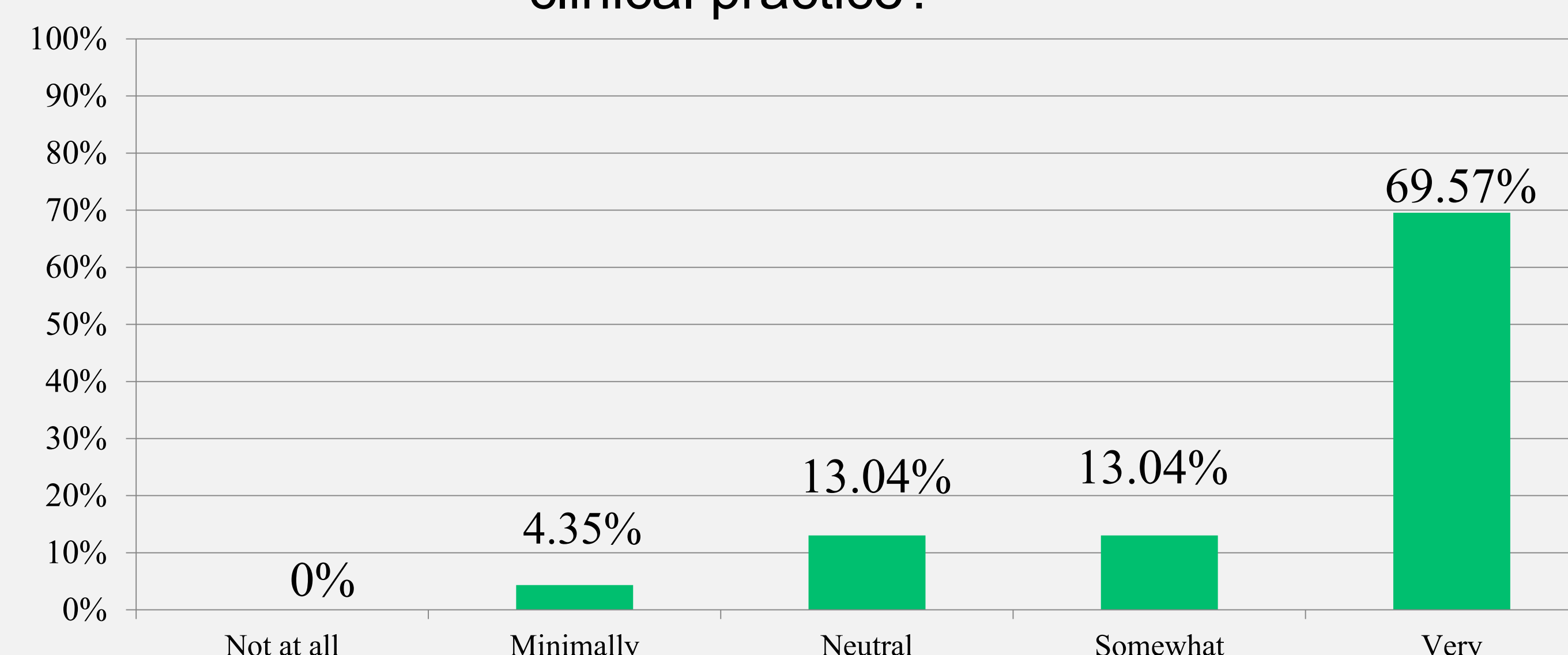
Data Analysis

- The researcher used descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to describe the data.

RESULTS

Figure 1

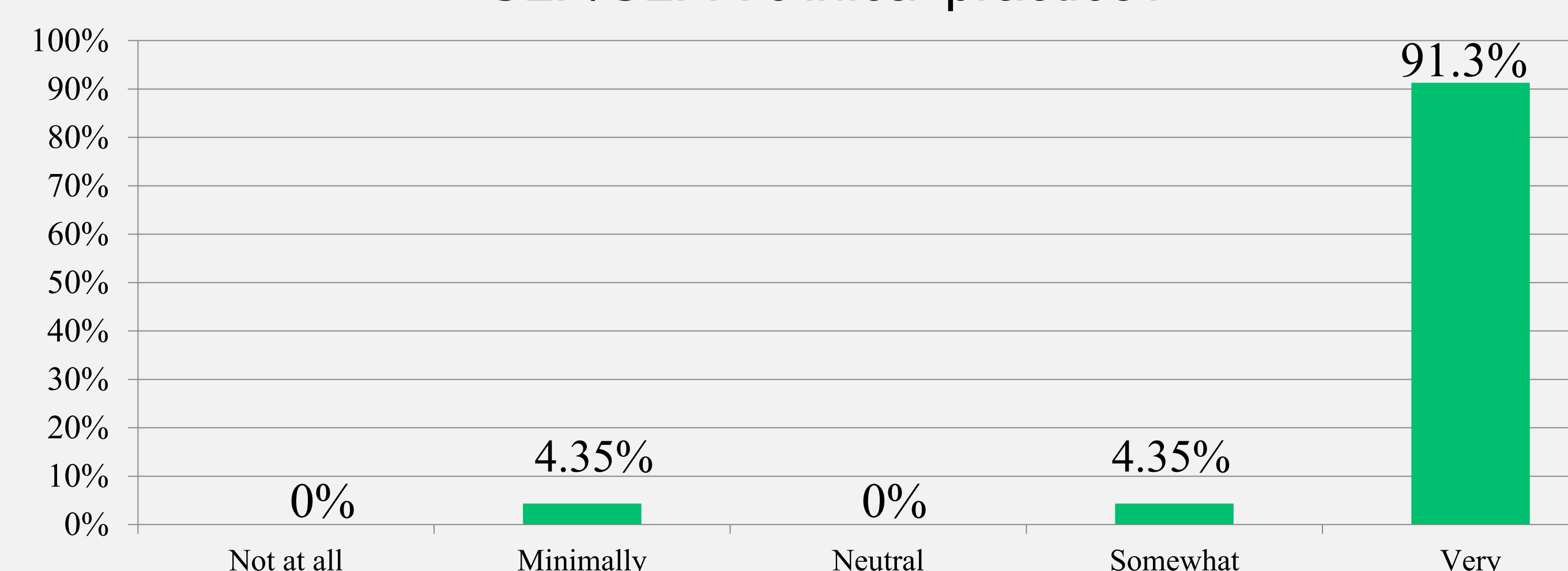
Using the following scale, how important is an understanding of social justice in an SLP/SLPA clinical practice?



- 69.57% of participants (n=16) believed that an understanding of social justice is important in a speech-language pathology clinical practice

Figure 2

Using the following scale, how important is it to put forth efforts to create equality among the populations you will service in your future SLP/SLPA clinical practice?



- 91.3% of respondents believed it is important to put efforts towards creating equality among the servicing populations/communities in their future clinical practice

DISCUSSION

The data collected showed that participants (graduate students) believed that social justice is important to the field.

- This is consistent with the work of Unger et al., (2021), who found that SLPs also considered social justice important to them and to the field

Most questions revealed a similar trend throughout

- There are similar trends in the field, which show a growing interest in delivering fair services and nontraditional approaches (e.g., tele-practice)

Almost all participants (91.3% or n=21) believed that it is important to put efforts towards creating equality among the populations and communities in which they will be servicing as future SLPs/SLPAs. Graduate students recognized the importance and implementation of social justice to speech-language pathology. This shows that students are aware of such issues in their pre-professional careers meaning once they become practicing SLPs/SLPAs, they may have the awareness and knowledge needed to perform for fair and equitable services.

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Response bias

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to provide introductory data concerning social justice perceptions among Communication Sciences and Disorders students. The study's findings revealed that students believe social justice is important in speech-language pathology. The information collected from this study can be used to further the implementation of social justice awareness and practice in students' academic studies before going into the field.

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