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# Perceptions of postgraduate students on the use of portfolio in the paediatrics department

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Portfolios, as structured collections of documentation, not only showcase a student's learning progress and achievements but also foster a self-directed approach to assessing their own performance and setting future goal (Birgin & Adnan, 2007). Existing literature predominantly addresses the broader usage of portfolios across various disciplines, underscoring their role in enhancing reflective practice and competency-based assessments (David et al., 2001). Although portfolios in paediatrics department provide advantages, their implementation encounters substantial obstacles. These include the substantial time and effort required to maintain them, the need for clear guidelines from faculty, and a varying degree of acceptance among students and faculty, who may prefer traditional assessment methods. This study specifically aims to address these challenges by exploring the perceptions of postgraduate students on the use of portfolios in the paediatrics department at the Defence Services Medical Academy.

## II. METHODS

Ethical permission for this study was granted in July 2022. The research was conducted over a six-month period from September 2022 to February 2023 within the Paediatrics Department at the Defence Services Medical Academy. To explore the experiences and perceptions of portfolio use in paediatric education, we employed purposive sampling to select six postgraduate paediatric students. We acknowledge the limitations of a small sample size. However, the focus was to gain a

preliminary understanding and not to reach data saturation. The study utilised a qualitative research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), incorporating focus group discussions to facilitate in-depth dialogue and collect rich qualitative data. Although initially described as employing a 'grounded theory' approach, it is more accurate to characterise the methodology as exploratory qualitative research. Data collection involved structured focus group discussions, which were carefully designed to prompt reflection on the students' experiences with portfolio learning. Data analysis was conducted using manual coding in conjunction with MAXQDA software, facilitating the organisation and thematic analysis of focus group transcripts.

## III. RESULTS

The data analysis revealed four key themes regarding the use of portfolios in assessing competencies in the paediatrics department.

### A. Theme 1: Value of Portfolios in Assessing Competencies

One participant stated, "Portfolios allowed me to reflect on my learning and track my progress towards meeting my competencies." Another participant added, "It was helpful to have a structured way of documenting my experiences and reflecting on my strengths and areas for improvement." The participants also noted that the use of portfolios provided an opportunity for self-directed learning and development.

### *B. Theme 2: Time and Effort Required*

One participant stated, "It was challenging to find the time to update my portfolio regularly, especially with other demands on my time." Another participant added, "The process of compiling evidence and reflecting on my experiences was more time-consuming than I anticipated." The participants noted that clear guidelines and expectations were necessary to ensure the success of the portfolio assessment process.

### *C. Theme 3: Need for Feedback and Support*

One participant stated, "I appreciated receiving feedback from my supervisors on my portfolio, as it helped me to identify areas for improvement and set goals for the future." Another participant added, "It was helpful to have regular check-ins with my supervisors to discuss my progress and receive support and guidance." The participants noted that faculty members needed to be trained in providing feedback and support to ensure the success of the portfolio assessment process.

### *D. Theme 4: Limited Impact on Career Development*

One participant stated, "While portfolios were helpful in documenting my progress towards meeting my competencies, they did not have a significant impact on my career development." Another participant added, "Portfolios were a useful assessment tool, but they did not provide me with opportunities for networking or career advancement." The participants noted that additional career development opportunities were necessary to complement the use of portfolios.

## IV. DISCUSSION

### *A. Implications for Practice*

Building on the insights from this study, the paediatrics department is encouraged to integrate portfolio assessment into its curriculum. The findings corroborate with a study who noted that portfolio use enhances self-directed learning and the documentation of competencies (Jimoyiannis & Tsiotakis, 2016). The comprehensive nature of portfolios allows students to systematically track their progress and reflect on their learning journey, fostering a deeper engagement with educational content. Implementing such assessments can not only enhance learning autonomy but also promote critical reflection among postgraduate paediatric students. This could lead to more personalised educational experiences and potentially improve competency acquisition.

### *B. Implications for Research*

While this study provides preliminary insights into the effectiveness of portfolio assessments, it also underscores a significant gap in the literature regarding

long-term impacts on learning outcomes and career progression within paediatric education. To provide a thorough assessment of the practical advantages and drawbacks of portfolio-based learning, studies could use longitudinal designs to follow the professional development of those who have participated in it.

### *C. Addressing Limitations and Strengthening the Argument*

The study is limited by its focus on a small cohort of postgraduate students within one department, which restricts the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, the exploratory nature of the research calls for cautious interpretation. The enthusiasm and perceived benefits reported by participants align with broader educational theories emphasising active learning and continuous assessment (Trowler, 2010).

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the perceptions of postgraduate students on the use of portfolios in the paediatrics department. The findings suggest that portfolios can be a valuable assessment tool, but clear guidelines and expectations, as well as feedback and support from faculty members, are necessary to ensure its success.

### Notes on Contributors

Dr. Tayzar Hein has played a pivotal role as the main author in this research study, contributing significantly to the conception, design, and execution of the investigation into the perceptions of postgraduate students regarding the use of portfolios in the paediatrics department.

In the early stages of the research, Dr. Nilar Lwin played a crucial role in conceptualising and designing the study. Her insights and experience contributed to shaping the research questions and methodology, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter.

As a co-author, Dr. Yephyo Aung has been actively involved in the ethical approval process, emphasising the importance of adhering to ethical standards in research. His commitment to ethical considerations has been instrumental in maintaining the credibility and integrity of the study.

### Acknowledgement

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### Ethical Approval

Ethics approval was granted by the Ethical Review Committee of the DSMA, Ethical Review Board (2/ERB/ 2022).

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this research study declare that there are no conflicts of interest that could potentially influence or bias the outcomes, interpretations, or conclusions of the study. A conflict of interest is defined as any financial, consultant, institutional, or other relationships that may pose a risk of bias or conflict with the objectivity and integrity of the research.

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