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# Impact of Clinical Enhancement on Emotional Status and Confidence in Optometry Students

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## INTRODUCTION

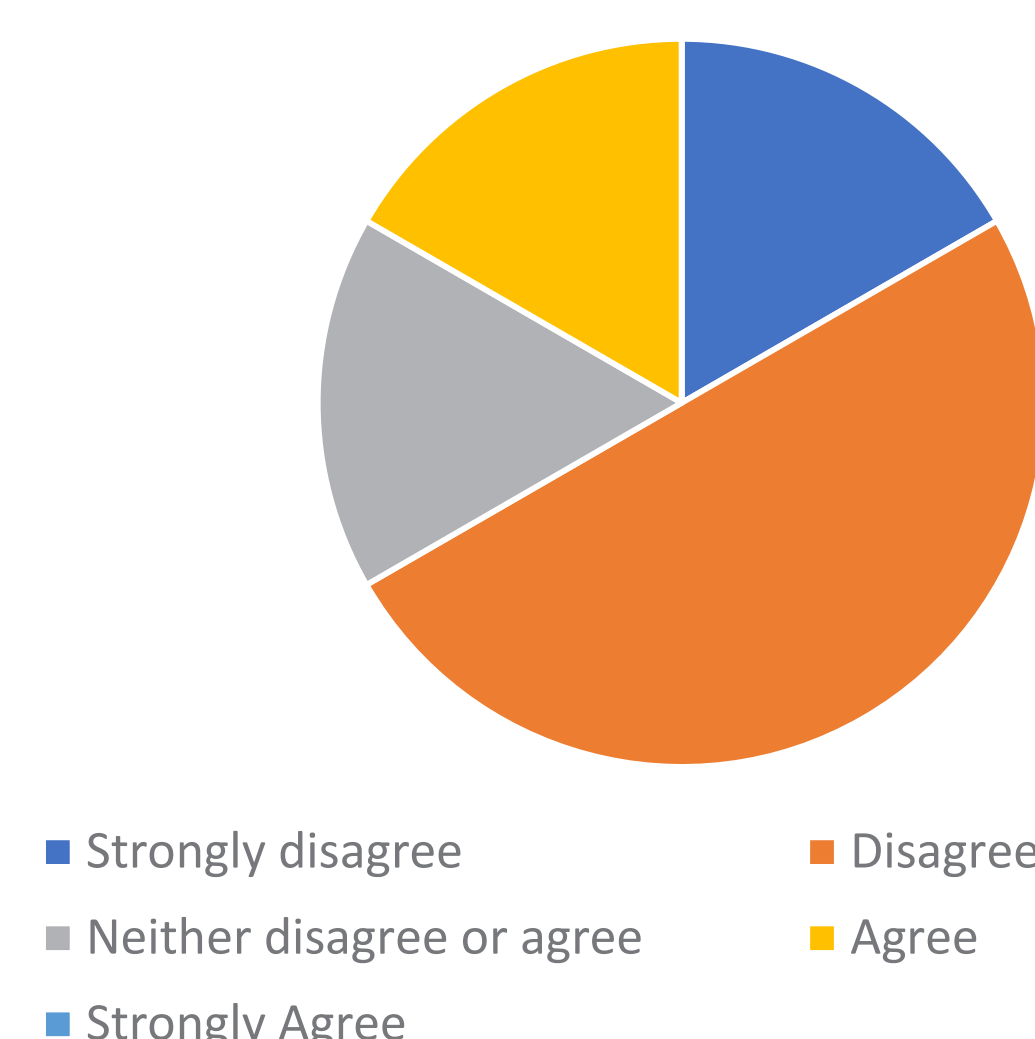
As optometry school populations trend towards more non-traditional backgrounds we see more students who need additional support to help them succeed. At Illinois College of Optometry, if a student is identified by a faculty as struggling in clinic they are referred for clinical enhancement. Research suggests that students who are identified as struggling often report more negative emotions. While the clinical enhancement process varies for each student, the end of enhancement for all students is based on their clinical performance rising to the level of being competent compared to their peers. How enhancement impacts clinical confidence should also be considered in this assessment of success. This study aims to qualify some of the feelings that students who went through enhancement had towards being identified as a struggling clinician and the impact the process has on their confidence as a clinician.

## METHOD

An IRB approved anonymous survey was sent to 17 students who participated in clinical enhancement for primary care between Summer 2020-Spring 2022. There were 9 questions in the survey. The survey centered around the emotions of students upon being referred for clinical enhancement as well as their clinical confidence levels pre and post enhancement.

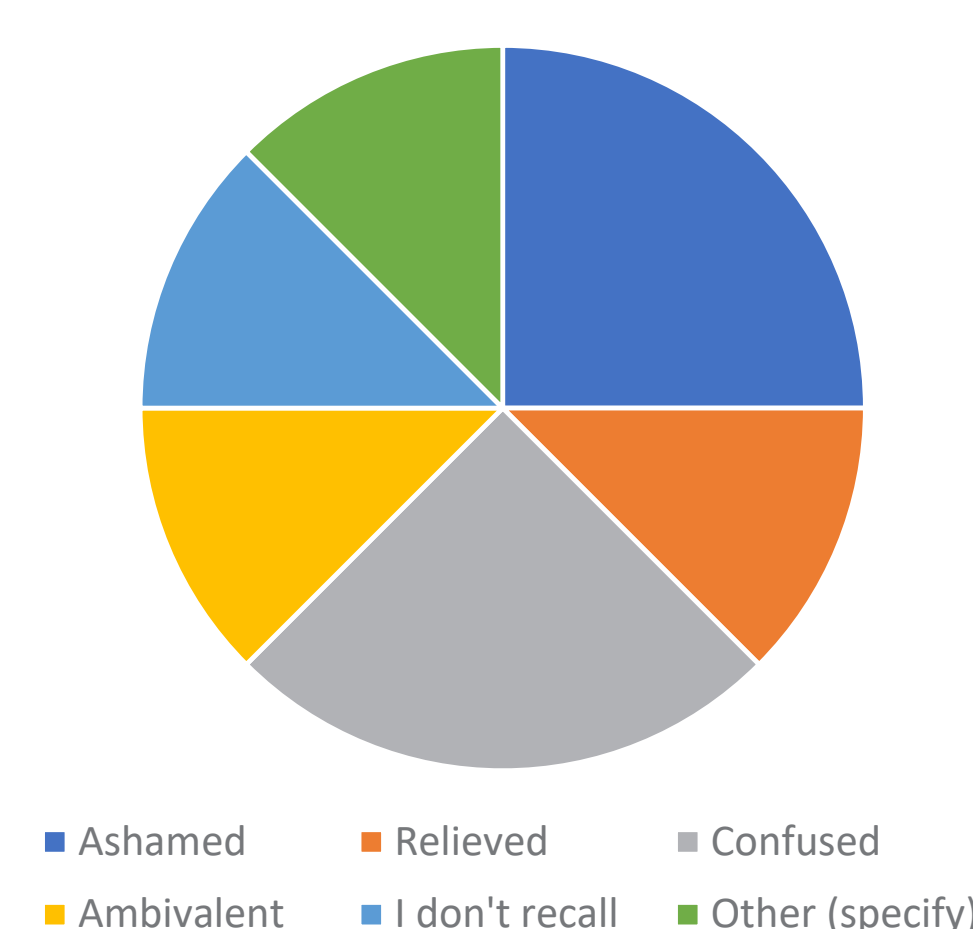
**FIGURE 1**

If you were referred by an attending faculty member, did you agree with the decision?



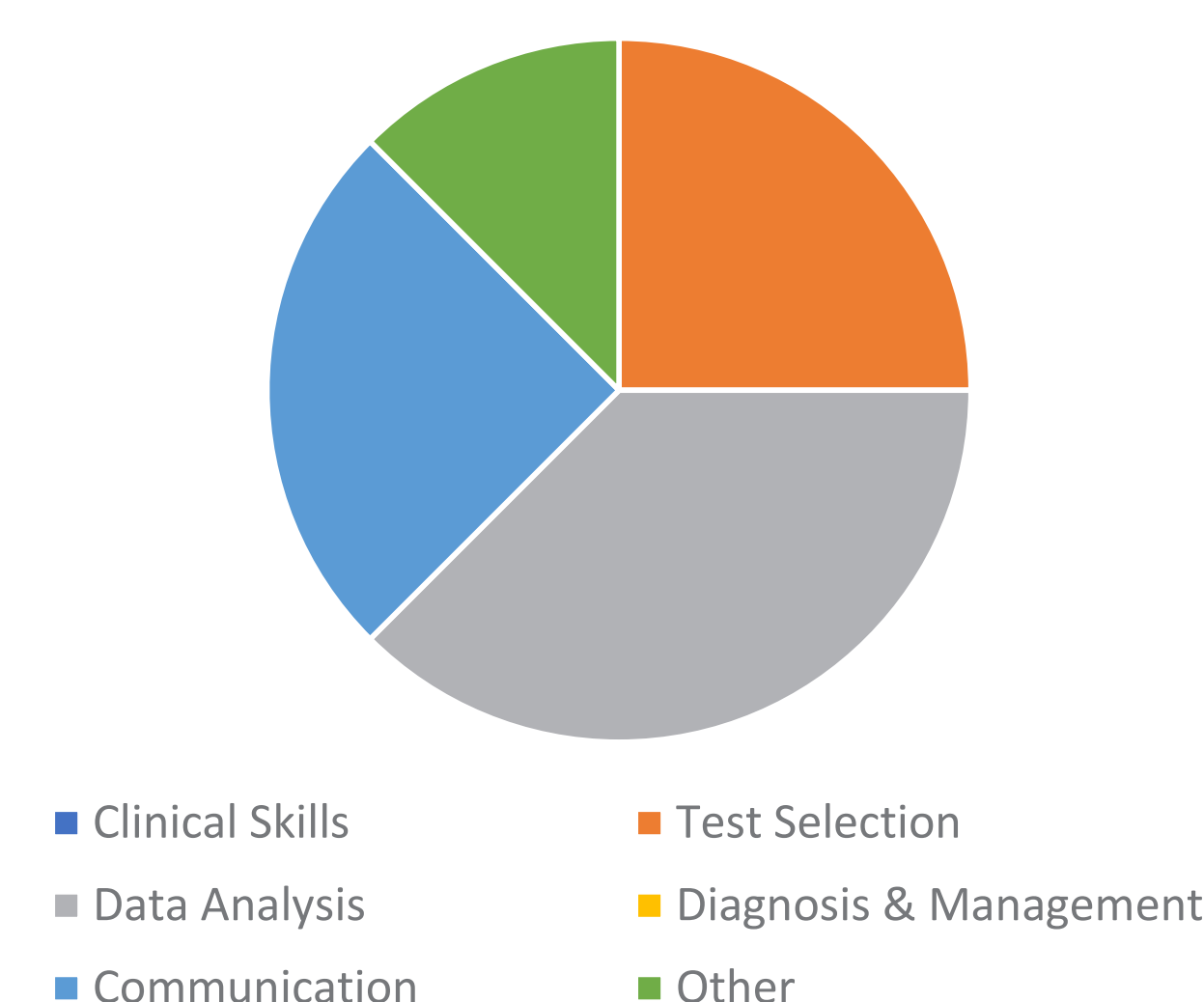
**FIGURE 2**

What best describes how you felt upon being referred/self-referred to clinical enhancement?



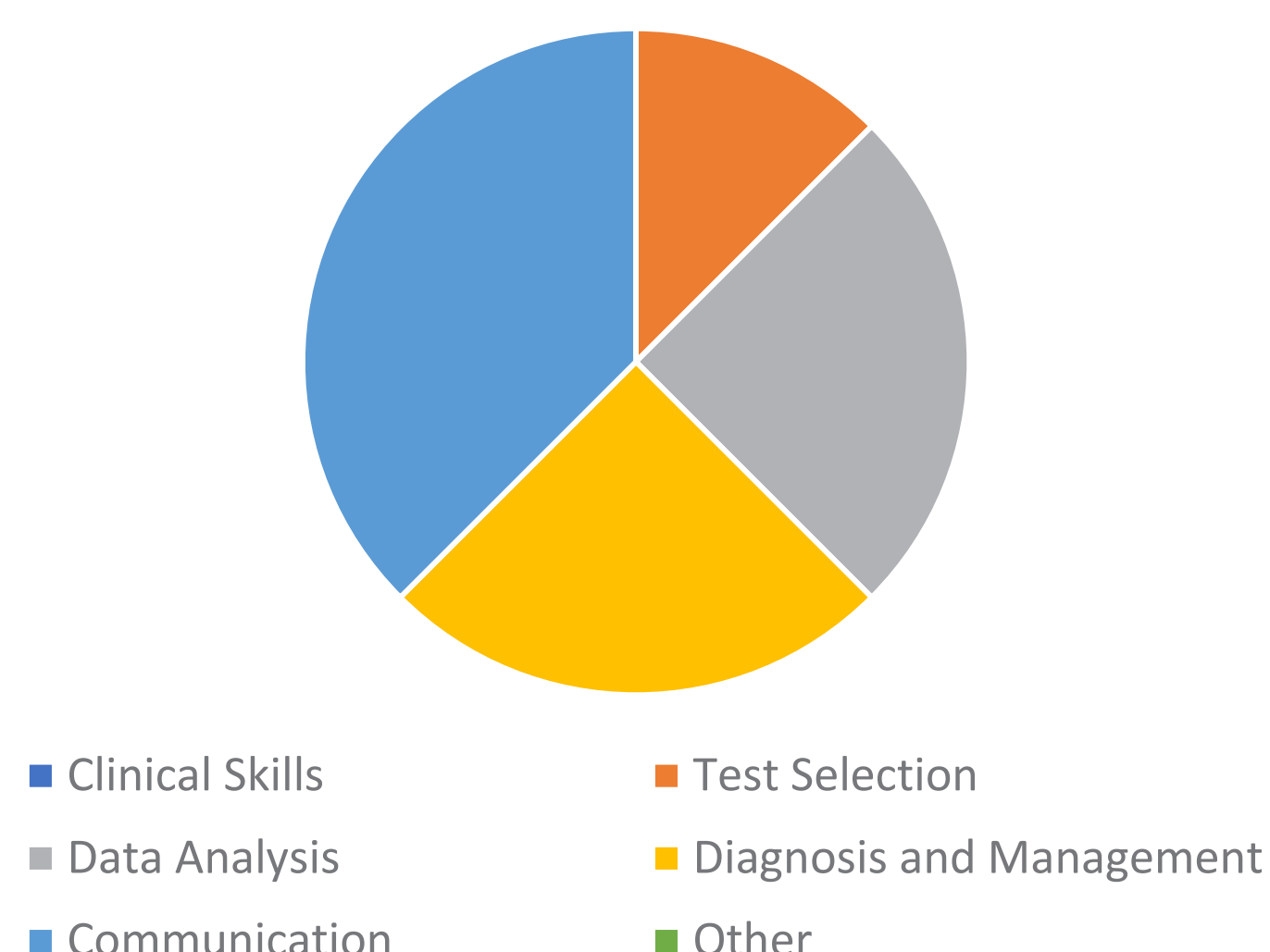
**FIGURE 3**

What area(s) of clinic would you consider to be the least confident in prior to starting enhancement?



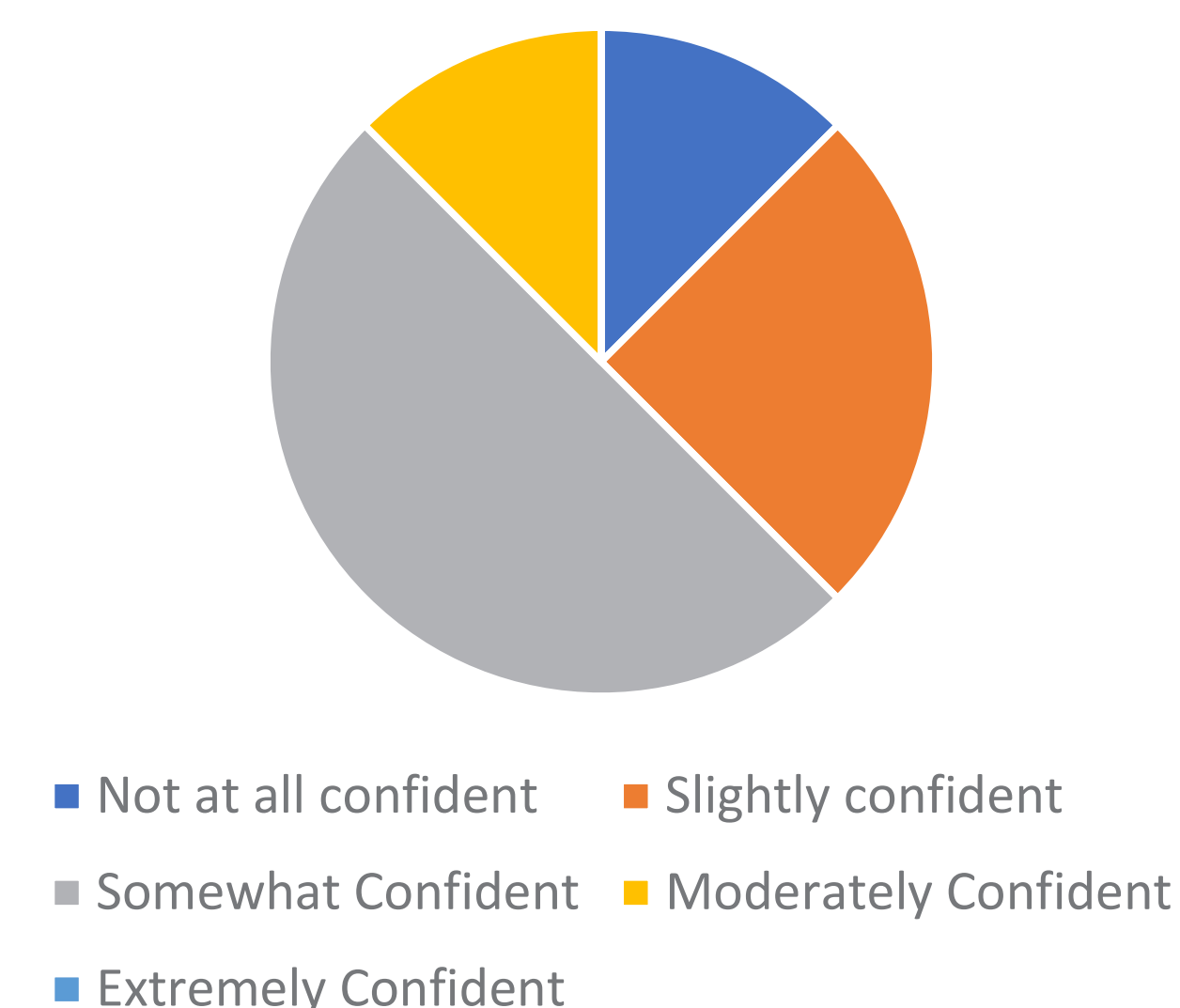
**FIGURE 4**

What area(s) of clinic did you see the greatest improvement in confidence after enhancement?



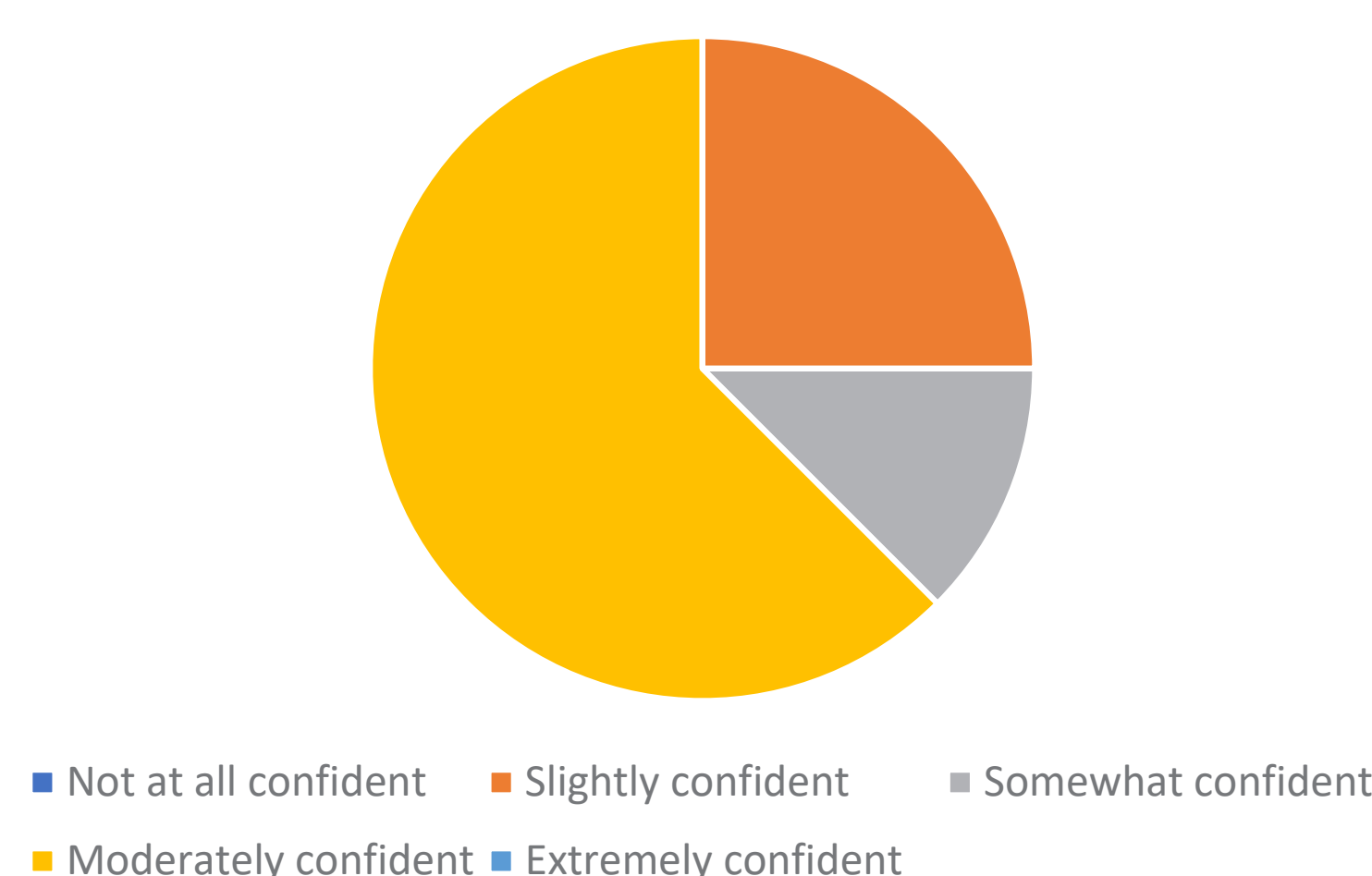
**FIGURE 5**

How would you rate your overall clinical confidence prior to starting enhancement?



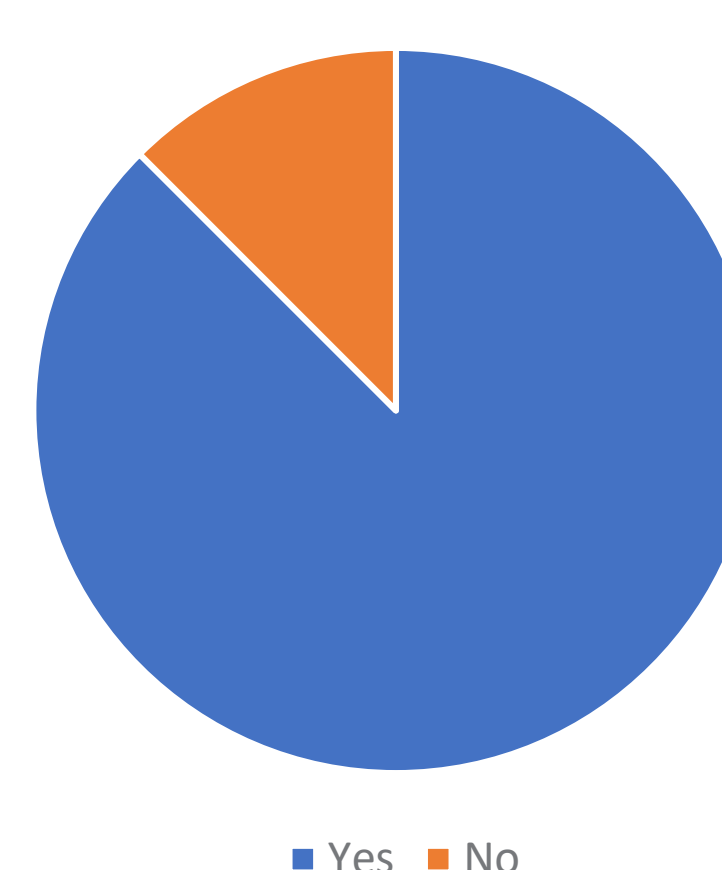
**FIGURE 6**

How would you rate your overall clinical confidence after completing enhancement?



**FIGURE 7**

Overall did you find clinical enhancement helpful?



## RESULTS

Eight students responded to the survey. Of those respondents, the majority either strongly disagreed (17%) or disagreed (50%) with the faculty referral for clinical enhancement. [Figure 1] The most common adjectives used to describe their feelings upon referral was "Ashamed" (25%) and "Confused" (25%), followed by "Relieved" (12.5%) and "Ambivalent" (12.5%). [Figure 2] The clinical area that respondents felt the least confident in prior to enhancement were "Data Analysis" (37.50%), "Test Selection" (25%), "Communication" (25%), and "None" (12.5%). [Figure 3] The clinical area's that respondents saw the greatest improvement in confidence after enhancement were "Communication" (37.5%), "Data Analysis" (25%), "Diagnosis and Management" (25%), "Test Selection" (12.5%). [Figure 4] When considering overall clinical confidence prior to starting enhancement, 12.5% reported being "not at all confident", 25% reported being "slightly confident", 50% reported being "somewhat confident" and 12.5% reported being "moderately confident". [Figure 5] After clinical enhancement this shifted to 62.50% reporting being "moderately confident". [Figure 6] When considering the overall benefit of clinical enhancement, 87.50% found it to be helpful. [Figure 7]

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight the emotional and self-awareness hurdle involved in initiating clinical enhancement. This barrier is very real and often delays students getting the help that they need. That being said, the study also indicates in this small sample that there is a true benefit to the confidence levels of students undergoing clinical enhancement. While confidence may not equate to competence, it certainly plays an important role in a student's ability to meet the needs of their patients and succeed in clinic.

## REFERENCES

Available upon request

## CONTACT

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