

Change in the Perception of Medical Students in Different Classes

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Abstract

Objective: To identify any change in the perception of medical students about themselves and their education environment during different years of study in the medical college.

Materials & Methods: This cross sectional study was conducted in six different medical colleges of Pakistan. Study was conducted on naturally formed groups of medical students i.e. 1st year, 3rd year and final year MBBS. Total of 1196 students were included in this study. Data collection procedure used was questionnaire which contained both open and close ended questions. Written consent was taken from all the participants. SPSS 17 was used to analyze the data

Results: The level of satisfaction of students in first year regarding their studies, course content, likeliness of uniform in medical colleges interest in lectures was 62.5% compared to 51.75% in 3rd year. Again it rises to 63.25% in final year when they are about to finish their student life.

Conclusion: First year of students were much more satisfied with their studies, course relevance, conditions of lecture halls and use of technology like multimedia. Then, there is a sense of dissatisfaction in third year. In final year, the students become more positive towards their studies.

Key words: Education environment, Lectures, Multimedia, Perception.

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Introduction

Perception is one of the oldest fields in psychology. Perception (Latin word *perceptio*) is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment.¹ Perception is a cognitive process in which information processing is used to transfer information into the mind where it is related to other information. Perceptual constancy is the ability of perceptual systems to recognize the same object from widely varying sensory inputs.² Same object from a different view makes a different perception on our brain.³⁻⁶ For example, a coin looked at face-on makes a circular image on the retina, but when held at angle it makes an elliptical image. In normal perception these are recognized as a single three-dimensional object. The philosophy of perception is concerned with the nature of perceptual experience and the status of perceptual data, in particular how they relate to beliefs about, or knowledge of the world.^{7,8,10,11}

Although many studies have been conducted on job satisfaction, literature on satisfaction of medical students is limited. Many factors may effect student's satisfaction. These include environment, necessary facilities such as libraries and information technology, hostel environment, clinical training etc. Addressing these and similar questions help authorities in managing the learning environment and improving training facilities to students.⁹ Since the students' satisfaction has been associated with their later professional attitudes, career commitment and retention, professional education faculties should be concerned with students' satisfaction as an outcome of the educational process. A low satisfaction rate in training may in the future, result in less number of trainees being interested in their departments. Student's satisfaction is also associated with their future career commitment. Teaching institutions should be concerned with students' satisfaction rate as an outcome of the educational process.¹⁰ Dissatisfaction may result in students changing their attitudes towards learning and even

their interest in training, which might have bad effects on the education in general. This of course will badly affect the level of the future of clinicians.¹¹

There are very few studies conducted in our country on the perception of medical students, how they perceive their studies. Before designing curriculum, it is important to identify the different factors which are important from the medical student's point of view. Present study was conducted to identify any change in the perception of medical students about themselves and their education environment during different years of study. Such studies can be helpful to the faculty of medical colleges in identification of different factors and raise the standard of medical education in Pakistan.

Materials and Methods

This cross sectional study was conducted at Rawalpindi Medical College Rawalpindi, Islamic International Medical College Rawalpindi, Foundation University Medical College Rawalpindi, POF Medical College Wah, Islamabad Medical & Dental College Islamabad and Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Medical College Mirpur AJK. Study was conducted from 1st Jan till 30th March 2015. Total of 1196 students (1st year: 216, 3rd year: 508, 5th year: 472) who consented for the study were included in the study. Data collection procedure used was questionnaire which contained both open and close ended questions. Written consent was taken from all the participants. SPSS 17 used to analyze the data. Frequency and percentages were calculated for qualitative data.

Results

The first question we asked was about the satisfaction of students with their studies. 1061 students participated to answer this question. 28 were not sure and did not answer.

Out of these 1061, 560 were satisfied while slightly more than half of participants i.e. 564 were not satisfied with their studies due to some reason. Interestingly in the initial year (first year) of medical college, majority (63.79%) were satisfied which declined sharply in the next few years (45.76%). Though, in the final year, slightly more (50.47%) were happy and quite satisfied with their progress Table 1. The 2nd question in our study was the relevance of course with their profession. 1164 students replied. 1076 (89.46%) thought that the course taught to them was relevant to their future profession. Only 88 students didn't agree with the relevance of their curriculum (may be partly) in some way. This way of thinking was almost constant from first to final year except for a small decline in 3rd year. (Table 2) Third question asked in our study was interest of medical students in lectures. Majority of the third year students (70.81%) didn't like the lectures as a tool of mode of transfer of information. As a whole, 59% of medical students were against the lectures in our study. Detail of interest of students in lectures was shown in table 3. For more than a decade now, uniform was introduced in different medical colleges in Pakistan. This controversial decision was a topic of debate from many parts of our society. Uniform is rarely seen on university level anywhere in the world. In contrary to normal belief, almost 54% of students were in favor of uniform during the study hours' table 4. In the next question, we were interested to know the most interesting time spend by medical students out of class room, practical, PBL, dissection hall & wards. This question was asked only to the 3rd and final year students. Only 8.9% of 3rd year students like to spend time in lecture halls. Maximum number (38.80%) of 3rd year likes to stay in wards. Similarly, final year (35.24%) also got preference to spend maximum time in clinical rotation.

Table 1: Satisfaction level of students with their studies

	1 st year				Total	3 rd year				Total	Final year				Total
	Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)			Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)			Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)		
Q 1	148 (63.8)	80 (34.5)	4 (1.72)	232	200 (45.76)	292 (52.40)	8 (1.83)	437	212 (50.5)	192 (45.71)	16 (3.8)	420			

Table 2: Perception of medical students regarding relevance of course

	1 st year				Total	3 rd year				Total	Final year				Total
	Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)			Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)			Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)		
Q 2	196 (90.74%)	12 (5.04%)	8 (3.70%)	216	436 (85.15%)	52 (10.15%)	24 (4.68%)	512	444 (92.50%)	24 (5%)	12 (2.5%)	480			

Table 3: Interest of medical students in lectures

	1 st year				3 rd year				Final year			
	Yes	No	DNA	Total	Yes	No	DNA	Total	Yes	No	DNA	Total
Q 3	92 (43.51%)	124 (57.40%)	4 (1.85%)	220	128 (27.46%)	330 (70.81%)	8 (1.71%)	466	232 (47.93%)	236 (48.76%)	16 (3.30%)	484

Table 4: Preference of uniform in medical colleges

	1 st year				3 rd year				Final year			
	Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)	Total	Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)	Total	Yes No (%)	No No (%)	DNA No (%)	Total
Q 4	112 (51.85%)	96 (44.44%)	8 (3.70%)	216	220 (48.67%)	280 (61.94%)	4 (.88%)	452	300 (60.97%)	184 (37.39%)	8 (1.62%)	492

DNA: Did not answer

Discussion

The first question we ask our participants was regarding satisfaction with their studies. Interestingly, more than 50% (564/1061) were not satisfied with some aspect of their studies. Vahid Ziaee and his colleagues conducted a study in Tehran University of Medical Sciences which was published in 2004. According to them, 61.2% (153/250) were not satisfied with their education.¹² Some theories such as career theory has been used to explain how occupational and psychological variables can influence attitudes toward careers. Students' satisfaction and educational process have a great role in career commitment and professional attitudes; these areas thus need to be explored.¹³⁻¹⁵

One of the most commonly discussed topics in medical college education today is the importance of lecture as tool of transfer of information. About 59% of our students do not like the use of lectures in medical education. This topic was discussed by Khan H et al in an article published 2003. According to him, students' disinterest in lectures is apparent from their absences as they miss lectures every now and then giving priority to other academic activities, extracurricular involvements, or personal problems.¹⁶ Factors which can affect the lecture attendance were identified as: distance of college from place of residence, strictness of teacher in marking attendance, interest in subject, subject as a part of examination, and requirement of university to appear in examination.¹⁷ Interestingly many medical instructors insist that there is no other efficient method of delivery than lectures that combines content delivery and student interaction simultaneously.¹⁸

Next question we asked was a controversial topic in our country for more than a decade since the introduction of uniform in some of the medical colleges. Surprisingly 54% of our participants were in favor of uniform. At university level, uniform is rarely used anywhere in the world. Though

white coat is accepted as an integral part of dress of medical students and doctors. The white coat has been a traditional symbol of the medical profession since the late 19th century. Regarding clinical education a study done by Ziaee V et al has reported that overall satisfaction with clinical education was 38.8%, outside and bedside teaching 52% each and theoretical education, 70.8%.¹¹ Though medical students and other students in the health care professions appear to be satisfied with their clinical practices and learning, the elements that contribute to this satisfaction aren't well known.¹⁴ As the outcome of the students' satisfaction has both immediate and long-term consequences and this is likely to affect their professional life in future.^{11,19}

Conclusion

In first year of medical education, students were much more satisfied with their studies, course relevance, and conditions of lecture halls and use of technology like multimedia. Then, there is a sense of dissatisfaction in third year. Once again, when these students enter in the final year, become more positive towards their studies. Hence the moral of students which is very high in first year should be maintained and lifted during their stay in institution. Negative dip in the middle should be countered by academic and positive psychological reinforcement.

Conflict of Interest

This study has no conflict of interest as declared by any author.

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