

# The Views of Faculty Members and Basic Sciences Medical Students on the Students' Teacher Evaluations in Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch, Iran

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## Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Teacher evaluation is among the most influential methods of quality assurance and is essential to continuous quality improvement in education systems. The current study aims to evaluate the views of faculty members and basic sciences medical students on the evaluation of teachers by students in the Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch, Tehran, Iran.

**Methods:** The current descriptive analytical study was conducted in the faculty of medical sciences during the winter of 2015. The census sampling method was used to select the participants and 335 students and 35 faculty members were enrolled accordingly, of which 300 students (89.5%) and 33 faculty members (94.2%) completed the study. The data collection instrument used was a 20-item questionnaire (created by the researcher) scored on a 5-option Likert scale. The formal validity, content validity, content validity ratio (CVR), content validity index (CVI), and the structural validity of the questionnaire were confirmed using exploratory factor analysis. Its validity was measured by the Cronbach's alpha. Data were analyzed with SPSS using t test.

**Results:** It was found that the lecturer's popularity, students' grades, and the research evidence provided by the lecturer in the classroom were the most important factors, while gender and course type were the least important factors influencing students' evaluation of lecturers in the current study. The mean scores of students and lecturers regarding their views on the teacher evaluation system were  $79.14 \pm 11.89$  and  $78.00 \pm 8.15$  respectively. According to the results of an independent t test, no significant difference was observed between the scores of lecturers and students regarding their views on the teacher evaluation system ( $P > 0.01$ ).

**Conclusions:** The questionnaire created by the researcher showed good validity and reliability to evaluate the views of faculty members and students on the teacher evaluation system. The lecturer's popularity, students' grades, and the research evidence provided by the lecturer were considered as the most important factors, while gender and course type were the least important factors influencing the teachers' evaluation, based on the comments of the faculty members and students.

**Keywords:** Evaluation of Professors, Influencing Factors, Students, Faculty Members

## 1. Background

Assessing the success rate of educational approaches is one of the main targets of teacher evaluation methods, which are usually performed by students in order to improve education quality and to impact management strategies (1). The evaluation of lecturers comprises a comprehensive assessment of their functional quality in educational tasks (capabilities and competencies) and other responsibilities. Some studies believe that such attempts require data on the educational activities to be properly collected, and compared by setting indices in order to judge the success rate of lecturers against the acquisition of pre-set targets. Results of the evaluation can make waves in education, promote educational practices, and increase

the lecturers' level of educational functioning; however, teacher evaluation is largely performed carelessly, conducted on an individual basis, and based on inadequate evidence. To improve teaching quality and to stress its role in the development of education and research goals, lecturers can be evaluated in order to detect their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, such evaluations help the university authorities to make the best decision when hiring and promoting faculty members (2-10).

Some lecturers suggest that students' views of teaching method and their evaluation of teachers are the best methods of evaluating lecturers and their educational activities. In spite of various biases in the use of students' viewpoints in lecturers' evaluation, the method is abun-

dantly applied and used in the evaluation of teachers at different levels of higher education in Iran (11).

Some researchers agree with the evaluation of lecturers by students and believe in the significant role of this method in promoting lecturers' teaching quality. Opponents, however, believe that students judge their teachers emotionally, resulting in the following factors having a remarkably influence on their perception and judgment: personal characteristics, environmental factors, popularity and reputation of the teacher, the way of dealing with students, students' grades, time of class, and time of evaluation (5, 6, 9, 10, 12-21).

Results of a study by Amini and Honardar showed that approximately 70.9% of lecturers were satisfied with the results of the teacher evaluation conducted by students and most of them believed that results of such evaluation improved their teaching quality. More than half of the respondents, however, believed that students prejudge their teachers and evaluate them based on their personal interests (22). Aghamirzaei et al. indicated the teacher's methods, teaching skills, and functional skills were the main factors influencing students in their evaluation of teachers (23). In a study by Ali Asgharpour et al. 90.9% of the students noted teaching skills as one of the main factors influencing teacher evaluation. They also noted that the strictness of the teacher affects his/her score in the valuation, and that students normally give lower scores to stricter teachers (2). Results of a study by Deghani et al. in Yazd University of Medical Sciences, Yazd, Iran, indicated that the teacher's scientific experience, knowledge, and personal characteristics were among the main factors influencing the evaluation of teachers by students (13). Investigation of students and faculty members' views on the evaluation of teachers by students seems necessary due to its importance and the widespread usage of such evaluation system in Iranian universities. Furthermore, research into such evaluation is also required as a result of the concerns of and disagreements between lecturers, as well as dissatisfactions of students at the Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch, regarding the current performance evaluation system. The quality of the university education system can be improved by identifying the factors influencing teachers' evaluation. No similar study has thus far been conducted in the Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch. The current study thus aims to analyze the view of faculty members and basic sciences medical students—the two fundamental pillars of the teacher evaluation system—on the evaluation of teachers by students in the Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch, in order to find a reliable solution for the current educational. In addition, the identification of teachers' weaknesses and strengths helps policy makers to mod-

ify and improve the quality of education.

## 2. Methods

The current descriptive, cross sectional study was conducted in the spring semester of 2015 in the Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch, using the census sampling method.

The study population comprised all faculty members ( $n = 35$ ) and actively engaged freshmen or upper years in medical sciences ( $n = 335$ ). The data collection instrument was a questionnaire created by the researcher, which was developed based on the factors influencing the lecturer evaluation by the students using literature, references, and the book developing a comprehensive faculty evaluation system. The first part of the questionnaire gathered demographic data of faculty members (age, gender, rank, highest educational attainment, and duration of cooperation with the university) and of students (age, gender, and grade). The second part constituted 20 questions, scored on a 5-option Likert scale from completely agree to completely disagree, which was used after confirming its validity and reliability. All questions had a positive structure, with higher scores implying more positive attitude.

To assess the content validity, the content validity ratio (CVR) and content validity index (CVI) were used. The questionnaire (teachers' questions) was distributed to the lecturers in the staff room and they were asked to complete it as soon as possible. The students' questions were distributed to the students in a classroom and collected after 20 minutes, following a prior arrangement with the lecturer. Participation in the study was voluntary and the questionnaires were completed anonymously; participants were assured about the confidentiality of their data. The structural validity of the instrument was assessed using exploratory factor analysis and its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the percentage of relative frequency, mean, and standard deviation (SD), as well as *t* test with SPSS version 19 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL).

## 3. Results

A total of 300 questionnaires were completed by the students with 89.5% response rate. In total, 33 questionnaires were completed by faculty members with 94.2% response rate. Most of the students (73.3%) were female and studied in semester 5 (33.33%). The mean age of the students was  $20.58 \pm 2.02$  years. Most of the responding lecturers (66.70%) were female. The mean age of the lecturers was  $52.17 \pm 6.19$  years and most of them (69.70%) were assistant professors and held PhD degrees (66.70%).

The CVI and CVR for all variables were  $> 0.9$  and  $> 0.8$  respectively. The exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation showed that the varimax-rotated components comprised 3 factors. The internal consistency of the factors was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. If the internal consistency was  $\geq 0.7$ , the questionnaire can be used for large-scale studies. The internal consistency of the current study instrument was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient in a population comprised 300 students and 33 faculty members. The Cronbach's alpha for the first, second, and third factors were 0.72, 0.70, and 0.73 respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The Extracted Factors and Reliability Coefficients for the Questionnaire Items

Factor	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
1	12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	0.72
2	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14	0.70
3	1, 2, 3, 4, 13	0.73

The mean total scores for the views of students and lecturers were  $79.14 \pm 11.89$  and  $78.00 \pm 8.15$  respectively. The difference between the mean total scores was thus insignificant. There was no significant difference between the mean scores of professors and students views, based on the independent t test ( $t = 0.54$ ;  $P = 0.590$ ).

To evaluate the fitness of data in the current study using exploratory factor analysis, 2 statistics were used: first, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) (0.72) and second, the Bartlett test [ $\chi^2 = 1566.73$ ; degree of freedom (df) = 190;  $P < 0.001$ ].

The evaluation of the fitness of data using exploratory factor analysis showed that all 20 items used to assess the study variables could confirm the hidden variables. Since the KMO index was 0.72,  $> 0.7$  and  $< 1$ , the sample size was adequate for factor analysis and data could be fitted to infrastructural and fundamental factors. The P value was  $< 0.001$ , based on the Bartlett method, which indicated the fitness of factor analysis to identify the structure of the factor model; the hypothesis of correlation matrix separation was rejected.

According to Table 2:

1. The evaluation scores of lecturers, given by the students, indicated the popularity of lecturers.
2. Lecturers' evaluation sheets were valid and reliable.
3. Students provided reliable judgments on the effectiveness and performance of their teachers by completing the evaluation sheets.
4. The students who received good grades tended to exaggerate their evaluation of the course and its lecturers.
5. Senior students gave higher scores to the lecturers.

6. Freshmen gave higher scores to the lecturers.
7. Lecturers who taught specialized courses received higher scores.
8. Lecturers who taught basic sciences received higher scores.
9. The evaluation of lecturers by students improved the performance of lecturers.
10. Considering gender bias, female lecturers received higher scores than their male peers.
11. Considering gender bias, female students gave higher scores to female lecturers.
12. Lecturers who taught difficult courses received lower evaluation scores.
13. The researcher-lecturers who provided research evidence for the class received higher evaluation scores.
14. The evaluation of lecturers by students could improve the quality of education.
15. Lecturers who taught in larger classes received higher evaluation scores.
16. Lecturers who taught in smaller classes received higher evaluation scores.
17. Lecturers who held morning classes received higher evaluation scores.
18. Lecturers who held afternoon classes received higher evaluation scores.
19. If the number of questions in the evaluation sheet was fewer (for example, less than 20), the lecturers received higher evaluation scores.
20. If the number of questions in the evaluation sheet was high (for example, more than 20), the lecturers received higher evaluation scores.

According to Table 2, about 64.3% of students and 72.7% of lecturers believed that the evaluation scores given to lecturers by students indicated their popularity. A total of 41.7% of students and 39.4% of lecturers believed that the instrument had good validity and reliability. The third component assessed the reliability of students' views on the performance and effectiveness of lecturers: the results of the current study indicated that 62.3% of students and 72.7% of lecturers disagreed with or had no idea about this evaluation system. To better explain this, 72.3% of students and 66.7% of lecturers believed that the students who received higher scores evaluated the course and its teacher with higher scores. Most of the lecturers and students disagreed with or had no idea about the impact of students' grade, course, and gender on teachers' evaluation: 56.0% of students and 60.6% of lecturers believed that the results of the teachers' evaluation improved lecturers' performance. In addition, 57.6% of students and 72.7% of lecturers also believed that the results of such evaluation improved the quality of education. Accordingly, 55.7% of students and 66.7% of lecturers believed that the lecturers

**Table 2.** A Comparison of Absolute and Relative Frequency Distributions Between Students' and Lecturers' Views

Variable	Answer					
	Agree		No Idea		Disagree	
	Lecturer	Student	Lecturer	Student	Lecturer	Student
1.	24 (72.7)	193 (64.3)	1 (3.0)	48 (16.0)	8 (23.2)	59 (19.7)
2.	13 (39.4)	137 (41.7)	6 (18.0)	79 (26.3)	14 (42.5)	84 (28.0)
3.	9 (27.2)	113 (37.7)	10 (30.3)	73 (24.3)	14 (42.4)	114 (38.0)
4.	22 (66.7)	217 (72.3)	9 (27.3)	34 (11.3)	2 (6.1)	49 (16.3)
5.	21 (27.3)	62 (19.7)	12 (36.4)	132 (44.0)	0 (36.4)	106 (35.3)
6.	6 (18.2)	7/5 (18.0)	12 (36.4)	122 (40.7)	15 (45.5)	121 (40.4)
7.	13 (39.4)	70 (23.3)	12 (64.4)	75 (25.0)	8 (24.2)	155 (51.7)
8.	1 (12.1)	64 (21.4)	18 (30.3)	123 (41.0)	14 (57.5)	113 (3.7)
9.	20 (60.6)	168 (56.0)	3 (9.1)	39 (13.0)	10 (30.3)	82 (30.7)
10.	16 (6.1)	52 (17.3)	17 (42.4)	73 (24.3)	0 (51.5)	175 (58.4)
11.	13 (3.0)	51 (17.0)	20 (36.4)	63 (21.0)	0 (60.6)	186 (62.0)
12.	22 (66.7)	167 (55.7)	3 (9.1)	40 (13.3)	8 (24.2)	93 (31.0)
13.	22 (66.7)	217 (72.4)	8 (24.2)	63 (21.0)	3 (9.1)	20 (6.7)
14.	24 (72.7)	173 (57.6)	4 (12.1)	53 (17.7)	5 (15.1)	74 (24.7)
15.	7 (3.0)	53 (17.6)	21 (18.2)	98 (32.7)	5 (78.8)	149 (49.7)
16.	18 (54.5)	108 (36.0)	8 (24.2)	99 (33.0)	7 (21.2)	93 (31.0)
17.	21 (63.7)	139 (45.3)	6 (18.2)	83 (27.7)	6 (18.2)	81 (27.0)
18.	11 (15.2)	43 (14.4)	21 (18.2)	86 (28.7)	1 (66.6)	171 (57.0)
19.	14 (42.4)	92 (30.6)	14 (42.4)	122 (40.7)	5 (15.2)	86 (28.6)
20.	18 (6.1)	35 (11.7)	14 (48.5)	121 (40.3)	1 (45.4)	144 (48.0)

who teach difficult courses receive lower evaluation scores. Furthermore, 72.4% of student and 66.6% of lecturers believed that the lecturers who provide research evidence for class receive higher evaluation scores.

Most of the faculty members and students believed there was a significant relationship between the number of students in the classroom and the lecturers' score in the evaluation: 82.4% of students and 97.0% of lecturers disagreed with or had no idea about the fact that teachers of larger classes receive higher evaluation scores. In addition, 45.3% of students and 63.7% of lecturers believed that lecturers who hold morning classes receive higher evaluation scores. Both students and lecturers disagreed with or had no idea about the impact of the number of questions in the evaluation sheet on the results of students' teachers evaluations.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The evaluation of teachers in university is a strategy for improving and enhancing the quality of education and elevating the level of students' knowledge. The views of students and faculty members on the factors influencing the results of such evaluation is therefore of great importance.

According to the results of the current study, the popularity of the lecturer is one of the most important factors influencing the evaluation of lecturers by students, based on the views of faculty members and students at the Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch. These results correspond with those of a study by Vakili et al. in Semnan University of Medical Sciences, Semnan, Iran (24), which reported that approximately 60% of the students evaluated their lecturers based on their popularity and renown (24). In addition, the results of a study by Dargahi and Mohammadzadeh showed that students were influenced by the popularity and renown of their lecturers while evaluating them (5).

According to the results of the current study, about 40% of faculty members and students approved the reliability and validity of evaluation sheets. The validity of most commonly used evaluation sheets is inadequate: those sheets designed unprofessionally usually have low reliability and can even render the results of the evaluation void (25).

The results of the current study indicate that most of the lecturers and students disagreed with or had no idea about the reliability of students' judgment. Ghafourian Boroujerdi et al. suggest in their study that students cannot judge their teachers since they do not have sufficient knowledge of the process of teaching; they therefore concluded that the results of such evaluations are unreliable (10).

According to the results of the current study, one of the most important factors influencing students' evaluation of teachers was the students' grades; in other words, the students who receive higher scores tend to give higher scores to the course and to its teacher. Baur believes that some lecturers give higher grades and easy tasks to students in order to receive higher scores in the evaluation process, which consequently promotes improper behavior among the students: they may flatter the lecturers, who then give them higher scores (26). Seif stated in his book, *Educational Measurement, Assessment, and Evaluation*, that the students who receive higher grades tend to evaluate their teacher with higher scores in the evaluation, compared with the ones who receive lower grades (27).

The results of the current study show that students and faculty members disagreed with or had no idea about the impact of students' grades on their evaluation of teachers; however, it seems that there was a relationship between the teacher evaluation and students' grade in that seniors usually give higher scores to their teachers than those of freshmen (2, 28). Nevertheless, the results of a study by Motearefi et al. indicate a significant correlation between the views of students and their grade; in other words, seniors had more negative views of their teachers than freshmen (29).

According to the results of the current study, the course type (specific, basic, or general) had no impact on the teachers evaluation; however, approximately 60% of faculty members and students believed that the lecturers who teach more difficult courses usually receive lower evaluation scores. Javadi et al. also found no significant relationship between the teachers' evaluation score and the average grades of students in specific courses (30). It seems that the lower grades of students in difficult and specific courses do not lead students to give their teachers lower evaluation scores.

The results of the current study also indicate that evaluation of faculty members could improve the quality of

education, as well as the performance of lecturers. The results of a study by Amini and Honardar in Jahrom University of Medical Sciences, Jahrom, Iran, showed that approximately 60% of the lecturers believed that their evaluation scores could significantly improve the quality of their performance (22). Rahimi et al. also reported that 28.7% and 9.4% of the lecturers estimated medium and high improvement in their performance based on the results of evaluation. In addition, 69.9% of the lecturers considered the teachers' evaluation to have a significant impact on the quality of education (31). It seems, however, that the views of lecturers on the impact of evaluation on their performance is controversial.

Most of the faculty members and students of the Islamic Azad University, Tehran Medical Sciences Branch, disagreed with or had no idea about the impact of gender on the evaluation of the opposite gender. Amini and Honardar also indicated in their study that approximately 65% of students considered gender to have a low or medium impact on the evaluation of opposite gender (22). Vakili et al. also showed that factors such as gender had a low impact on the evaluation of teachers (24). On the other hand, Dargahi and Mohammadzadeh showed the significant effect of the gender of students and lecturers gender on the teacher evaluation: for example, female students usually give higher evaluation scores to their female teachers, compared with their male counterparts (5). Most of the students and lecturers in the current study believed that the teachers who provide research evidence in their classes receive higher evaluation scores. Vakili et al. also indicated in their study that 60.3% of students considered the research activities of their teacher in his/her evaluation. They evaluated the views of students at Semnan University of Medical Sciences and showed that the sharing of recent and up-to-date scientific information in lectures was one of the main and significant variables affecting the evaluation of teachers a point that should be taken into account (24).

Recently, the size of the classroom and the number of students have been considered among the most important factors influencing the evaluation of teachers. Results of similar studies indicate that increasing the number of students in a classroom results in the teaching method focusing on lecturing and thus directly influences the teaching method (32). Dargahi and Mohammadzadeh reported in their study that the number of students in the classroom affects the evaluation score given by the students (5). Rafiee and Mosayebi noted an adverse relationship between the number of students in the classroom and teacher's evaluation score, indicating that the more students in the class, the lower evaluation scores. The results of their study also indicated the impact of the number of

students in the classroom on teacher's evaluation score (9).

The results of the current study also showed that lecturers and students agreed on the impact of the time a class is held on the results of teacher's evaluation: students gave higher evaluation scores to lecturers conducting morning classes. Vakili et al. also showed the effect of timetabling on the results of evaluation and reported that 65% of students considered the question of morning or afternoon classes to have a significant effect on the results of teachers' evaluation (24).

According to the results of the current study, faculty members and students either somewhat agreed with or had no idea about the hypothesis that fewer questions in the evaluation sheet results in improved results in the teacher evaluation. It seems that fewer questions in the evaluation sheet may not provide reliable data and, as such, sheets with limited questions should not be used for the evaluation of lecturers (25). Results of a similar study by Fattahi et al. showed that, in more than 75% of cases, the teachers' evaluation sheet was appropriate in terms of the number and clarity of the questions (33). Amini and Honardar also indicated in their study that approximately 50% of students noted the appropriateness of number of questions in the teachers' evaluation sheet (22).

#### 4.1. Conclusions

The results of the current study indicate that most of the faculty members and students noted the significant impact of students' teacher evaluations on the improvement of lecturers' performance. In addition, the popularity of the lecturer, students' grades, and the lecturer's ability to provide research evidence for the class were the most important factors affecting the results of teachers' evaluation by the students, while gender and course type were the least important factors.

Students' comments on the teacher evaluation were influenced by factors such as students' grades, the lecturer's research activity, the number of students in the classroom, the time of class, the degree of difficulty of the course, etc. Therefore, to apply the results of the teacher evaluation by faculty members to promote performance and improve the quality of education, it is recommended that teacher evaluation sheets are prepared based on studies with good validity and reliability. It is also necessary to reform the current evaluation system and to emphasize a targeted approach in order to conduct an overall evaluation of lecturers' performance.

#### Supplementary Material

Supplementary material(s) is available [here](#) [To read supplementary materials, please refer to the journal web-

site and open PDF/HTML].

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