

PERCEPTIONS AND FEEDBACK OF MEDICAL STUDENTS TOWARDS CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study is to evaluate the practicability of the environment during the practical session of an exam.

Place and Duration of Study: August 07 to August 13, 2015 in the Department of Anatomy at Army Medical College.

Study Design: Cross sectional survey.

Material and Methods: Two hundred second year MBBS students were selected using non-probability convenience sampling, during a running practical session of the Second Professional Examination at the Army Medical College. Feedback was collected from these students after they had undertaken their theory section of the university exam. The student feedback was collected via an open and closed ended questionnaire which focused on pre-examination arrangements, examination conduct and general impressions of examination environment.

Results: Of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 198 (99%) were returned duly filled. Overall, 78.7% were satisfied with the waiting areas which were provided with basic amenities. Seventy six percent students were satisfied with the punctuality of the session and 92.4% students agreed that instructions were clearly conveyed prior to start of examination. About 68.5% of the students were satisfied with the helpful behavior of the conducting staff, 90.9% of the students agreed that instructions on stations were clear and concise and 78.2% of the students agreed that adequate time was provided in performing tasks. Approximate 63.5% of the students were satisfied with the general atmosphere of the laboratory and Dissection Hall.

Conclusion: Overall, the students were satisfied with the general environment and conduct of the exam.

Keywords: Assessment, Medical Education, Practicability of Assessment Procedures.

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INTRODUCTION

The Army Medical College has an ambition to provide the best and most promising environment and learning experience¹ to encourage students to perform to their full capacity. There is a clear indication from students that feedback on examinations is important to them. Students play a critical part in the evaluation, development and augmentation of the quality of this learning experience². Feedback from students allows the college to evaluate how its service establishment is viewed by its most important group of stakeholders- the students.

Students act as collaborators not just the passive receivers of the teaching and learning process, playing a crucial role. Feedback on any of the learning processes whether it's learning or assessment provides students with the opportunity to remark on their experience³.

A feedback mechanism helps to highlight the quality of students' learning and evaluation experiences, as required in preparation for and as part of review practices. This also provides a vision of academic delivery in relation to the expectations of students in order to improve that component⁴. Feedback from students allows the teachers to modify their methods to meet the needs of the students. Many international experts consider feedback to be an important element of assessment for learning, naming it among the

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most critical influences on the students' learning. The atmosphere of the examination environment exemplifies an affective tone⁵. Assessment is not just a test but is reflective of the learning process. The physical environment influences overall student satisfaction⁶. One way in which the physical environment can impact perceptions of service quality is by evoking emotional responses that influence behaviors. Plenty of research has been conducted regarding how environmental factors such as ambience, social interaction (attitude of the instructor), and design cues (seating and layout) create affective emotional responses from students and influence overall satisfaction. A primary goal of creating effective environments is to enhance the assessment experience. Future researchers should measure actual learning by directing specific and varied measures in the exam place. These tools can improve the teaching and assessment process and subsequently enable educational institutions to improve examination systems. A gap was identified in the examination process through direct evidence during this study. The rationale of the present study was to obtain student feedback on the examination environment at the Army Medical College.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The descriptive cross-sectional survey of 200 second year MBBS students at Army Medical College using non-probability convenience sampling was conducted from August 07 to August 13, 2015, during the running session of the Second Professional Examination. Feedback was collected after students had undertaken their theory part of the university exam, during their practical session in the Department of Anatomy. OSPE was organized by the individual department for the practical component of the subject. The student feedback was collected via questionnaire focused on the pre examination arrangements, the examination conduct, general impression and any suggestions.

Students who completed the questionnaire were not asked at any stage for their names.

There was no penalty for abstaining from submission of feedback, since this drill was to evaluate the deficiencies and conduct of examination.

The Feedback questionnaire contained 21 questions out of which 19 questions were prepared on Likert's scale and two questions were open ended. Responses from students in the form of the feedback questionnaire were statistically analyzed through descriptive analysis. Student response data was grouped together for the entire class for the purpose of data analysis. The faculty received a report which summarized all the information organized as percentage values.

RESULTS

Of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 198 (99%) were returned duly filled. Overall, 78.7% were satisfied with the waiting areas which were provided with basic amenities, 75.6% students were satisfied with the punctuality of the timing 92.4% students agreed that instructions were clearly conveyed prior to start of examination. About 68.5% of the students were satisfied with the helpful behavior and of the conducting staff, 90.9% of the students agreed that instructions on stations were clear and concise and 78.2% of the students agreed that adequate time was provided in performing the tasks. Sixty four percent of the students were satisfied with the general atmosphere of the laboratory and Dissection Hall. (table-1). The open ended questions were analyzed for the qualitative data. Generally the students were satisfied with the overall conduct of examination but complained about the staff's attitude. Most of the students reported that the examiners were very helpful and available when needed. However the students found The Stair hall waiting area, inappropriate due to non-availability of food and water. Some of the students thought that the time for the observed and non-observed stations was not sufficient. The general impression was that the system was functional, but there was room for improvement. In response to the suggestions for improving

examination systems at AM College, ninety percent students proposed for the waiting area to be equipped with more seating arrangements, fans and drinking water. They also suggested that the Exam should be more organized and systematic and a system should be devised to spread the burden of simultaneous assessment of 5 subjects. Finally, it was deemed that the time span for the viva was too long and tiring along

and examination process through feedback will provide improvements in the system. Interest in practical exercises by students appears average from our results, and the reasons were mainly inadequate equipment/manpower support.

Data Analysis

The questionnaires were administered on paper and the data values were presented as

Table: Feedback regarding the general atmosphere of the laboratory and dissection hall.

Variables		Frequency	Percentages
Waiting area (comfortable, provided with basic amenities etc	Comfortable	155	78.7
	Un comfortable	36	18.3
	Total	191	97.0
Timing observed punctually?	Yes	149	75.6
	No	45	22.8
	Total	194	98.5
Instructions clearly conveyed prior to start of examination?	Yes	182	92.4
	No	11	5.6
	Total	193	98.0
Conducting staff helpful / Cooperative?	Very helpful / cooperative	41	20.8
	Helpful/cooperative	135	68.5
	Not helpful	13	6.6
	Not helpful at all	2	1.0
	Total	191	97.0
Instructions on stations were clear/concises?	Yes	179	90.9
	No	10	5.1
	Total	189	95.9
Time provide in tasks?	Excessive	18	9.1
	Adequate	154	78.2
	In-adequate	22	11.2
	Total	194	98.5
General atmosphere of lab and DH?	Noisy	15	7.6
	Quiet	125	63.5
	Conductive to smooth conduct	53	26.9
	Disruptive	2	1.0
	Total	195	99.0

with the short time limit for each station at gross spotting. Student’s recommendations for better learning were as follows: examination space should be a more interactive environment with improved electricity supply. Smaller groups in practical sessions and improved supervision by teachers were also suggested by many students. Involvement of students in program appraisals

percentages and frequencies in order to calculatedescriptive data.

DISCUSSION

Learning environments are typically constructivist in nature, engaging learners in reasoning through broad resource sets⁷. A healthy and compassionate working environment

aids in the achievement of milestones, desired results, intended standards, professional competence, sound knowledge and other domestic oriented goals for people and institutions. An unhealthy learning environment becomes an obstacle that impedes the development of outstanding performance in individuals thus culminating in failure.

To preserve the sacredness of best performance in individuals, a working environment must be calm, clear, structured, accountable, well regulated, monitored, communicative, dedicated, accommodative, helpful and able to foster the considerations and needs of the people along with divulging them knowledge.

Assessment is an important part of education. A medical curriculum should constantly develop in response to the need of students, institutions and communities⁸. Student feedback about educational practices is a useful basis for modifying and improving learning environments. The ultimate aim of such feedback is to identify areas of strength and weakness in the examination environment. All of the staff that interacts with the learners, needs to behave professionally. Students should know who they can contact if they feel they are being asked to do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Positive assertions displayed in the classroom and referred to regularly with the sharing of objectives and revising learning, actively foster positive approaches and performances among students, especially during examinations⁹.

Traditional exam exercises present students with a tightly scripted practice that they are expected to follow, making them physically engaged but not mentally. Students' understanding of the overall concepts in practical sessions is thus poor, and their primary concern is obtaining the expected results and writing prescribed reports¹⁰. Students should be encouraged to work together, allowing for better interactions and efficient supervision.

The physical environment has been thought to interact with the learning process¹¹. From one perspective, the physical environment has been thought to increase or decrease the likelihood that learning and teaching will be effective. The physical environment includes any characteristic of the setting such as examination center style, furnishings layout and comfort¹², as it was the case in our study. The seating organization might influence both the existence and the nature of social interaction¹³. A study of working conditions have reported direct positive and negative effects on learners' morale, sense of personal safety and feelings of effectiveness during the exam¹⁴.

Building renovations provide a renewed sense of hope and a belief that the administration cared for the learners' learning environment. The ability to control the temperature of a learning and assessment environment is crucial to the effective performance of students. Uncomfortable conditions not only make it difficult for students to concentrate on their lessons, but inevitably limit the amount of time spent on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work.

Hines' study of large, urban high schools in Virginia also found a relationship between building condition and student achievement¹⁵. McGuffey (1982) reported that heating and air conditioning systems appeared to be very important, along with special instructional facilities (practical laboratories and tools) contributory to student accomplishment. Proper building maintenance was also found to be related to better insistence and less castigating problems in one cited study¹⁶.

Poor environmental settings such as flaking paint, nonfunctioning toilets, poor lighting, inadequate ventilation, and defective heating and cooling systems can disturb learning as well as the health and the self-esteem of students¹⁷. An important finding in our research suggested that the social element of the environment had a major impact on student satisfaction. Educators

should consider physical environment and how it influences overall student satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Overall, students were satisfied with the general environment and conduct of the exam at the Army Medical College.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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