

Perspectives of Faculty Members at Shahid Beheshti School of Dentistry on Teacher Evaluation Process

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Abstract

Objectives: Evaluation is an essential and comprehensive process for all organizations. Evaluation has become very common in Iran during the past decade, and different universities assess their teachers through various methods, including various questionnaires. This research aimed to evaluate the perspectives of faculty members about the teacher evaluation process. **Methods:** This qualitative observational study involved 98 faculty members from Shahid Beheshti School of Dentistry who were willing to participate. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire. The questionnaire items were selected using previous research conducted in this field. After verifying their validity and reliability, 10 items were chosen. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation coefficient and linear regression tests ($P < 0.05$). **Results:** This study involved 98 university professors, with a mean teaching experience of 12.95 ± 9.01 years. The mean score of their opinions about the evaluation system was 37.30 ± 4.75 . The opinion of faculty members regarding the evaluation system had a significant inverse relationship with teaching experience ($p < 0.001$) and male gender ($p = 0.025$). The results showed that 80.7% of the participants believed that the evaluation process effectively improved their teaching, although 66.3% did not approve the current evaluation method. **Conclusion:** Most faculty members believed that evaluation positively affected the quality of their teaching, although the current teaching methods were not satisfactory.

Keywords: Evaluation; Faculty Member; Dentistry; Professors

Introduction

Evaluation is a comprehensive and essential process in all organizations. It is even more influential for educational institutions seeking justice and excellence.¹⁻³ Academic evaluation uniquely determines and improves educational quality, guaranteeing continuous improvement.⁴ Accordingly, more than ten methods have been recommended in specialized texts for teacher evaluation, some being more common, such as peer evaluation, student evaluation, academic awards, and recognitions. However, a portfolio or academic profile is more common than other methods.^{5,6} The primary purpose of this type of evaluation is to facilitate faculty members' professional development. It is also considered a factor for promotion, appointment, etc. As a result, the primary purpose of teacher evaluation and improvement is to provide constructive feedback to faculty members, enhancing their competence.^{7,8}

Evaluation has become very common in Iran during the past decade, and different universities evaluate their faculty through various methods, including different questionnaires. However, teacher evaluation, usually done by students, has not significantly improved the quality of education.³ This is the result of the practical inference of teachers who have been teaching at university for

many years, and their teaching and performance are evaluated from time to time. Therefore, it seems that the evaluation of faculty members has not resulted in better teaching methods. Failure to conduct these evaluations regularly and accurately, the inappropriate delivery of its results to teachers and students, and the lack of change in professors' teaching methods are among the shortcomings of these evaluations. However, evaluation is a type of examination of teachers' abilities in teaching students and an examination of students' opinions and expectations of their teachers to improve the quality of teaching and eliminate its obstacles.^{4,9} Conducting an evaluation has many practical difficulties, among which are learners' judgment of the personal characteristics of the teachers rather than the quality of their academic performance. Moreover, factors such as completing the forms impatiently, irresponsibly, and dishonestly, the number of students, the course difficulty, and the type of course can influence the learners' evaluation of their teachers.^{7,10}

In recent years, many studies have been conducted on teacher evaluation in Iran, which have examined many influential factors in this field, including the assessment of faculty members. The studies conducted at Yazd, Birjand, and Ahvaz Universities of Medical Sciences showed that the evaluations are not sufficiently accurate and have not

been satisfactory in improving the quality of education.^{3,7,11} Also, in Yazd Medical School, the evaluation of professors and the variables of gender, educational course, and semester did not affect the current mean evaluation score of professors.³ However, studies in Kerman and Jahrom Universities of Medical Sciences showed that lecturers used the evaluation results to improve their teaching methods and agreed with the teacher evaluation.^{12,13}

Since evaluation is a critical and complex issue and requires high accuracy and reliability,¹⁴ and faculty members have different opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of evaluation, further research is necessary to investigate the teacher evaluation process and the factors involved in gaining a more comprehensive view from the perspective of the most critical stakeholders in the evaluation process. Furthermore, such studies are limited in dental education evaluation system. It is evident that if the teacher evaluation system is revised based on the comprehensive view of the teachers, it will be possible to use its results and accept feedback and consequently change the behavior of the faculty members based on the results. The current study aimed to explore the perspectives of faculty members at Shahid Beheshti Faculty of Dentistry regarding the teacher evaluation process and its influencing factors.

Methods

In this qualitative observational study, a questionnaire was developed to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed to all faculty members of Shahid Beheshti School of Dentistry during 2018-2019 for completion.

Research method

This research was conducted among all 98 faculty members of Shahid Beheshti School of Dentistry who were willing to participate. Sampling was done using the census sampling method. This study was registered with the ethics code IR.SBMU.DRC.REC.1398.239.

Data were collected by a researcher-made questionnaire that included demographic information and 10 items about the teacher evaluation system (based on previous studies)¹⁵⁻¹⁹ in domains such as acceptance and effectiveness, implementation, and evaluation-related factors.

The second section included one item on effectiveness (item 1), four items on implementation (items 2 to 5), and five items on factors affecting evaluation (items 6 to 10). Ten university professors evaluated and confirmed the validity and reliability of these items.

Two quantitative criteria, content validity ratio (CVR) and content validity index (CVI), were used to determine content validity. To measure the content validity, the questionnaire was given to ten dental and oral health experts, and they were asked to answer each of the 17 primary questions using three options (necessary, useful but not necessary, and not necessary). Subsequently, the questions that obtained $CVR > 0.6$ were included in the final questionnaire. After determining and calculating the CVR, three ranges of relevance or specificity, simplicity and fluency, and clarity of the questionnaire were calculated for each question to determine the CVI, and items higher than 0.73 were selected. Finally, out of 17 initially designed questions, ten questions were selected to conduct the study. For this purpose, the validated questionnaire version was pre-tested among four professors. Using the data obtained from this questionnaire, the reliability coefficient calculated using Cronbach's method was found to be 0.85 for this tool.

Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, from completely agree=1 to completely disagree=5. Scores less than 3 were considered negative opinions, and scores more than 3 were considered positive for each question. Data analysis was done by SPSS (version 16) software using Pearson correlation coefficient and linear regression tests ($P < 0.05$).

Results

Descriptive statistics of participants

Demographic variables of study participants are presented in Table 1.

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	46	46.9
	Female	52	53.1
Teaching experience	0-10 years	54	55.1
	11-20 years	19	19.4
	21-30 years	20	20.4
	≥31	5	5.1

The teaching experience of faculty members and their opinions about the evaluation system and its related factors are presented in Table 2.

The Pearson correlation coefficient revealed an inverse significant relationship between the faculty members' teaching experience and their opinions ($r=0.335$, $p=0.001$). According to the independent samples test, there was no significant differences between male and female faculty members' opinions ($P > 0.05$). However, the mean work

experience of female faculty members was significantly higher than that of male participants ($P < 0.001$) (Table 2).

Variables		Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value
Experience (years)	Male	6.84	2.83	<0.001
	Female	17.93	9.27	
	Total	12.95	9.01	
Opinions Score	Male	37.52	5.30	0.686
	Female	37.12	4.30	
	Total	37.30	4.75	

*: Independent Samples Test

Based on the linear regression test, the faculty members' opinions about the professors' evaluation system had an inverse significant relationship with teaching experience

($p < 0.001$) (the more experienced ones were more unsatisfied about the procedure) and male gender ($p = 0.025$) (Table 3).

Parameter	B	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval		P-value*
			Lower	Upper	
(Intercept)	41.828	1.2603	39.358	44.298	<0.001
[sex=male]	-2.512	1.1197	-4.707	-0.318	0.025
experience	-0.262	0.0621	-0.384	-0.140	<0.001

*: Linear regression

As shown in Table 4, most teachers approved the teacher evaluation process but criticized about the current process. They believed the right time to complete the evaluation form was before observing the test results, which should be reported to them confidentially. Most also believed that

students with bias tend to complete the evaluation form. They also noted that communicative and educational skills and extra activities such as journal club meetings were necessary for evaluating the results.

Items	Completely agree N (%)	Partly agree N (%)	No idea N (%)	Partly disagree N (%)	Completely disagree N (%)
1-The evaluation results are effective in improving the teacher's teaching.	32 (32.7)	47 (48)	6 (6.1)	8 (8.2)	5 (5.1)
2-The current teacher evaluation process is acceptable.	3 (3.1)	12 (12.2)	18 (18.4)	39 (39.8)	26 (26.5)
3-The right time to complete the teacher evaluation form by the student is before viewing the course grade.	47 (48)	37 (37.8)	6 (6.1)	4 (4.1)	4 (4.1)
4-The evaluation results should be communicated to the professors confidentially.	57(58)	17(17)	12(12)	8(8)	4(5)
5-Students complete the evaluation forms without bias and honestly.	2(2)	5 (5.1)	18 (18.4)	40 (40.8)	33 (33.7)
6-The teacher's communication skills affect the evaluation results.	47 (48)	41 (41.8)	6 (6.1)	2 (2)	2 (2)
7-The teacher's academic skills affect the evaluation results.	45 (45.9)	41 (41.8)	5 (5.1)	6 (6)	1 (1)
8-The nature of the courses is not the same, but the teachers are evaluated similarly.	39 (39.79)	35 (35.71)	12 (12.24)	8 (8.6)	4 (4.08)
9-The teacher's extra activities (journal club, providing services, consulting, etc.) are not considered in the evaluation.	38 (38.77)	30 (30.61)	15 (15.30)	9 (9.18)	6 (6.12)
10-It is important to use the opinions of specialist assistants in teacher evaluation.	45 (45.9)	42 (42.9)	8(8.2)	2(2)	1(1)

Discussion

In this study, 80.7% of the professors agreed that teacher evaluation effectively improved their teaching. A study at

Jahrom University of Medical Sciences found that 60% of the professors supported this idea.¹³ However, a study conducted at Birjand University of Medical Sciences indicated that 45% of teachers believed that evaluation had a high impact on the teaching process, and 45% stated that this impact was moderate.²⁰ Another study conducted at Iran University of Medical Sciences showed that teacher evaluation had minimal effect.²¹ This difference seems to be due to the different attitudes of teachers in various universities.

In the present study, only 15% of the teachers supported the current evaluation process. This was in line with a study conducted at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, where the teachers had a relatively negative opinion about the teacher evaluation process.¹⁵ It seemed that the evaluation process is not acceptable to most teachers.

The study results indicated that over 85% of teachers believed the optimal time for students to complete the teacher evaluation form was before they received their course grades. A study conducted at Kerman University of Medical Sciences revealed that teachers considered the right time for students to fill in the forms to be the last two weeks of the semester, which is consistent with the results of the present study.¹² The results of Saif's study showed that the evaluation time was not associated with the outcomes²², which is contrary to our results. According to some teachers, since some conditions, such as students' stress and anxiety and the grade obtained in the exam, may negatively affect the evaluation results, it seems that the right time to complete the evaluation form is before viewing the course grade.

In this study, 75% of the teachers believed that the evaluation results should be confidentially communicated to them. Therefore, the confidentiality of the teacher evaluation can positively affect the evaluation process, and this issue is considered to be acceptable at Shahid Beheshti Dental School.

In this study, 74.5% of teachers disagreed that students fill out the forms honestly and without bias. In the Birjand University of Medical Sciences study, most teachers had the same belief.²⁰ In another study at Jahrom University of Medical Sciences, the teachers believed that students completed the evaluation forms with a bias to a great extent.¹³ The personality characteristics of students and professors, difficulty of the course, the grading method, and communication with students can be influential.

In the current study, 88.8% of teachers emphasized the opinion of specialist assistants, which was similar to the study by Azizi et al., indicating that the perception teachers had about their teaching style was closer to the opinion of

specialist assistants compared to the opinion of dental students.²³ This seems to be due to the higher interaction and familiarity of specialist assistants with teachers than dental students.

It can be concluded that the faculty members of Shahid Beheshti School of Dentistry mostly believed that the evaluation results can improve their performance. However, the implementation of this system seemed unsatisfactory and needed modification. The professors themselves are supposed to recommend these changes, due to higher experience level. These amendments should be made according to the factors influencing the evaluation results in this study. It is important to consider the timing of form completion and ensure the confidentiality of the evaluation. Additionally, the communication and educational skills, along with the extracurricular activities of the teachers, should be taken into account when designing the evaluation form. The evaluation form should evaluate theoretical and practical courses separately, ensuring that the input from specialist assistants is taken more seriously. As this study utilized a questionnaire, it is important to note that using such tools in scientific research carries the potential for errors, which represents a limitation of this study.

Conclusion

Teacher evaluations can enhance the teaching quality, if adjusted for influencing factors.

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