Study of the Relationship between the Faculty Members’ Communication Skills and the Results of Evaluation of their Performance

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Professors’ communication skill is one of the main factors guaranteeing the improvement of education quality. Therefore, regarding this significant role and the special role of the students in evaluation of the professors’ performance and the effect of the communication of the professor and the students on the evaluation scores, this research has investigated the relationship between the faculty members’ communication skills and the results of evaluation of them by the students in Iran University of Medical Sciences.

Research Method: The current study is a descriptive-analytical one of cross-sectional type conducted on 10 education groups of Iran University of Medical Sciences in the academic year 2016-2017. The data collection tools were Quendom communication skill questionnaire and the scores of the evaluation of the professors’ performance by the students. The SPSS13 software and statistical tests such as Pearson’s correlation coefficient and variance were used for analyzing the data.

Findings: The data analysis indicated that the mean score of the total communication skill was 117.77. The mean score of the evaluation of the professors was 16.68. The highest mean score of evaluation belonged to the orthopedic group (18.41), and the lowest mean score belonged to the gynecology group (15.82). Pearson’s correlation coefficient indicated a direct significant relationship between the score of communication skill and the score of the evaluation by the students (p≤0.05). The variance analysis indicated that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of evaluation and communication skill of the groups (p≤0.05).

Conclusion: Paying attention to the issue of communication skill of the medical sciences professors requires a special look. Therefore, it is necessary to apply appropriate planning in order to upgrade and educate this skill, especially in clinical fields, so that we can guarantee the learners’ satisfaction and the education quality.

Introduction

Education system is a fully human organization and all its essence aspects originate from human, are accompanying and for humans. So, the skill of human relations depends on the faculty members’ skills in communicating. The faculty members of every
university are the main elements of transfer of knowledge and science to the students. Therefore, the credit of every university is depending on the scientific activities of the professors and the students [1]. One of the factors influencing the professors’ teaching ability is their communication skill [2]. So that, in teaching process, not only the teacher’s experiences and scientific viewpoints are effective, but also learning takes place by the effective communication of the teacher and the learner [3]. There have been different definitions of communication. However, in the education process, "communication" is defined as the relation between two or more people, subjects, or thinking. In other words, communication is referred to mutual understanding and common thoughts of the teacher and the learner. In simple words, interpersonal relationship is the process of exchanging information, emotions, and beliefs by verbal and nonverbal messages [4]. Thoughts and information exchanges should be done between the students and the professor, so that the full perception and learning takes place properly. The more this communication, the student’s self-confidence and learning motivation is increased, and consequently, the education quality is promoted. If this interaction is not done properly, even spending a lot of time and money cannot have the expected results [5].

On the other hand, the most usual method for determining the professors’ success in the educational purposes is the evaluation of the professors by the students [6]. Sensitivity about the process of education and learning in the universities increases the necessity of evaluation, because it will lead to the improvement of the education quality and consequently improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of education system of the country [7]. The proper execution of the evaluation requires collecting the necessary information about educational activities and choosing criteria for comparing the gathered information by them and then, making judgement about the professors’ success in teaching. In this regard, using the students’ opinions in evaluation of the professors’ performance is one of the common and convenient methods used by many reputable universities of the world [8]. Some researchers believe that this evaluation method can be effective in improvement of teaching methods and helping the students in taking credits [9]. Students’ feedbacks are considered as a major part of the cycle of quality improvement and this successful quality guarantees learning and teaching [10]. In some researchers, it has been stated that communication skills can make the teacher look good or bad [4]. For example, according to the study conducted by Yousefi et al. one of the factors having a positive correlation with the evaluation of the professors by the students is the interpersonal relationships of the students and the professors [11]. Also, in the study conducted by Amini et al. it was found that the faculty members’ communication skill is one the effective factors in the evaluation scores [2].

However, there are studies suggesting different results. For example, the study conducted by Norouziniya indicates no relationship between the professors’ communication skills and their evaluation scores [12]. Therefore, regarding these different results, the significant role of communication skills in achieving the education goals and improvement of teaching quality, and the important role of the students in evaluating the professor and the effects of the communication between the professor and the student on evaluation scores, this research has investigated the relationship between the faculty members’ communication skills (regarding the 5 scales of ability to perceive or understand verbal and nonverbal messages, regulating the emotions, listening skills, having insight to the communication process, and communication decisiveness) and the results of their evaluation by the students of Iran University of Medical Sciences. The current study is a descriptive-analytical one of cross-sectional type conducted at Iran University of Medical Science in academic year 2016-2017. The population of this research consists of the faculty members of Iran University of Medical sciences. 76 people of the professors of medical faculty with at least 5 years of teaching experience in the university were selected and enter the study by convenient sampling method.

In order to measure the relationship between communication skills and the results of evaluation of the professors, Queendom communication skill questionnaire (CSTR) was used. This scale included 34 questions and is published by Queendom institute (2004). It covers five subscales of the ability to perceive and understand verbal and nonverbal messages, regulating the emotions, listening skill, having a insight to the communication process, and communication decisiveness. The responding scale is 5 point Likert scale. In order to fill the questionnaire, the respondent should specify the level of correspondence of his/her current situation with each item on a five-point scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). First, the questionnaires were filled by the professors. Then, according to the codes considered for each professor (for the privacy of the collected information), the results of evaluation of them were measured by the results of communication skill questionnaires filled by the students for each professor in order to study the effectiveness of the professors’ communication skills and the students-professor relationship on the results of evaluating the professors.

In 2005, Hossein Chari and Fadakar reported validity and reliability of this questionnaire equal to 0.69 by Cronbach’s alpha method, and this suggests its internal consistency. This value was equal to 0.71 for the university student subjects and 0.66 for the high school students. In order to study the construct validity of the communication skill test and the structure of the communication skill factors, the analytical statistic method was used in the mentioned research in which the numerical value of KMO index was equal to 0.71 and the numerical value of the X2 index was equal to 2318.01 in Bartlett’s test of sphericity. This value was significant at 0.001 level. Also in 2006, Yousefi reported the total validity of communication skills scale equal to 0.81 by Cronbach’s alpha.
method and equal to 0.77 by split-half method. After data collection, the data were entered in SPSS software version 13. Descriptive statistics such as mean, Pearson correlation test, and variance analysis (with significance level of P≤0.05) were calculated.

**Findings**

In this study, 76 faculty members from 10 educational groups of clinical sciences of Iran University of Medical Sciences participated. The highest number was related to Ophthalmology group (22.4%) and the lowest number was related to Cardiology group (3.9%) (Table 1). Data analysis indicated that the mean score of total communication skills was equal to 117.77. The score of the professors' communication skill was at the highest level in the scale of the ability to perceive and understand verbal and nonverbal messages (32.71) and at the lowest level in the scale of communication decisiveness (15.76) (Table 2). The mean score of the evaluation of professors was 16.88. The highest mean evaluation score was belonged to Orthopedy group (18.41) and the lowest mean score belonged to women's group (15.52). Pearson correlation coefficient showed a direct significant relationship between the scores of communication skill and students' evaluation (p≤0.05). In the study of the evaluation score in the four scales of communication skill including ability to perceive or understand verbal and nonverbal messages, regulating the emotions, listening skills, and having insight to the communication process, a significant correlation relationship was observed (Table 3). Regarding the normality of distribution in Kolmogrov-Smirnov test, ANOVA was used for studying the significance of the difference between evaluation scores and communication skill scores of the groups. As presented in tables 4 and 5, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of evaluation and communication skill of the groups (p≤0.05). The results of Scheffe post hoc test indicated that the difference between scores of the evaluation of the gynecology and Orthopedy groups and also the difference between heart and Orthopedy groups was significant (p≤0.05).
Table 4: Variance analysis of evaluation scores of educational groups.

| Variable               | Source of Changes | Sum of Squares | Degree of Freedom | Average Squares | F Value | Significant Level |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------------|
| Evaluation             | Intergroup Variance | 42.24          | 9                 | 5.24            | 3.7     | 0.001             |
|                        | In-group Variance  | 93.43          | 66                | 1.41            |         |                   |
|                        | Total Variance     | 140.67         | 75                |                 |         |                   |

Table 5: Variance analysis of communication skill scores of educational groups.

| Variable               | Source of Changes | Sum of Squares | Degree of Freedom | Average Squares | F Value | Significant Level |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------------|
| Communication Skill    | Intergroup Variance | 710.59         | 9                 | 78.95           | 2.33    | 0.02              |
|                        | In-group Variance  | 2230.6         | 66                | 33.79           |         |                   |
|                        | Total Variance     | 2941.197       | 75                |                 |         |                   |

Discussion and conclusion

This study was conducted on 76 people of faculty members of Iran University of Medical Sciences to investigate the relationship between communication skill and evaluation score. The results indicated that there is a direct significant relationship between the scores of communication skill and evaluation. According to the study conducted by Yousefi et al., one of the factors affecting a positive correlation with the scores of evaluations of the professors by the students is the interpersonal relationship between professor and student [11]. In the study conducted by Amini et al., it was found that the faculty members’ communication skill is one of the effective factors on the professors’ evaluation score [2] and this is correspondent to the result of the current study. The study conducted by Norouziniya et al. contradicts the results of the current study [12] and suggest no relationship between the professors’ communication skills and their evaluation scores. As mentioned in some studies, proper relationship between the professor and the student lead to the students’ increased self-confidence and motivation and consequently, it will facilitate the learning process. So, the student having a good relationship with their professors will have better scientific achievements. Therefore, all mentioned factors can lead to more satisfaction of the students with the professors and giving higher scores in evaluation.

The current study indicated that the mean score of communication skills of the professors was 117.77 out of 170. In the study conducted by Peyman et al., this mean value was equal to 106, and in the study conducted by Norouziniya, this value was reported equal to 123.93 [12,13]. Also, in the study conducted by Rezaeian et al. the total communication skills of the faculty members of Rafsanjan was evaluated at a medium level [5]. Regarding the fact that the professors’ communication skills are influenced by different factors such as professional competence, scientific ability, their communication style, educational and ethical characteristics, etc., the difference between various universities and professors can highlight the role of these factors.

In the current study, the mean score of evaluation of the professors was 16.88. The highest mean score of evaluation belonged to orthopedic group (18.41) and the lowest mean score belonged to the gynecology group (15.82). Also, there was a significant difference in the mean scores of evaluation and communication skill of the groups. This difference of evaluation scores was also significant between the Cardiology and orthopedic groups. This difference can be due to the difference in expectation of the students from different groups. When entering different sections, the students have different goals, and they try to achieve them during the education period. Their success or failure can influence their viewpoints and scores. In addition, sometimes these differences may be due to the factors which are mentioned as evaluation problems in the articles. As mentioned in some studies, the students may be not honest in evaluation, or maybe they have not spent adequate attention and time for evaluation. Even, the evaluation can be influenced by other factors such as lack of sense of responsibility and awareness. The issue of the professors’ communication skills requires a special attention, especially in medical sciences in which the professors have different roles including teacher, leader, physician, etc. Therefore, appropriate planning is required to be applied for promotion and education of this skill, especially in clinical fields, so ensure the learners' satisfaction and our education quality.

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