Research Papers/Extended Abstracts

Student Satisfaction Surveys for the Undergraduates of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna

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Abstract

Regular monitoring of medical education program has become an essential component in university accreditation systems. Evaluation of feedback responses regularly through Student Satisfaction Surveys (SSS) is an important evidence-based approach to monitor and improve the quality of medical education.

The aim of this survey is to evaluate the education program of undergraduates through SSS. Five Google Form based SSS were conducted at the Faculty of Medicine (FoM), University of Ruhuna from September 2020 to May 2022. The questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the internal quality assurance cell and the Faculty Board, FoM. Google Forms were shared among the students of each batch immediately after their respective examinations. Responses given by the students were analyzed using Microsoft Excel program. Data were presented as frequencies and percentages. The response rate in the five SSS were 28.9%, 39.6%, 64%, 15% and 10%, respectively. The gradual increase in the response rate during the first three surveys was declined to 10% in the last SSS. A majority of the respondents were female students (range 65.5-78.3%). A majority (78.3%) of the students (range 57.9-82.1%) reported, “Learning objectives and timetables are given before the commencement of the course”. The quality of teaching in the FoM is good, except for the support provided to pass the repeat examinations. Around 10% (2.2-24.1%) of the students reported some kind of disabilities. Of the students with disabilities, a majority (71.4%) (58.6-100%) of the students reported that they are satisfied with the support received from the faculty to continue their learning activities. These findings would be beneficial for the university administrators for decision-making in developing the quality of medical education. However, the low response rates could reduce the reliability of the findings, as it does not adequately represent the target population.

Keywords: *Medical Education, Student Support Survey*

Introduction

Medical education is traditionally a more teacher-centered learning process. However, with modern reformations, teacher-centered learning has gradually moved towards student-centered learning (Jayawickramarajah, 2017). In addition, diverse educational techniques such as blended learning, small-group discussions, self-directed learning and collaborative learning have been incorporated into the undergraduate curriculum (Connell & Pascoe, 2004). Student-centered learning activities are often supported by continuous feedback evaluations through Student Satisfaction Surveys (SSS), as an evidence-based approach to improve the quality of medical education and to maximize student engagement with the course (Elliott & Shin, 2002).

Student satisfaction refers to subjective evaluation of student's experiences and the various outcomes associated within the education environment based on student's perceptions (Elliott & Shin, 2002). Thus, student satisfaction is being shaped and reshaped continually throughout the university life. Therefore, regular monitoring of the learning opportunities and university environment by SSS has become an integral component in the university education system strives for further development of its quality, based on students' perspectives (Weerasinghe & Dedunu, 2017; Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2017).

The SSS questionnaire applied in many universities has been developed under three categories with the purpose of evaluating the medical undergraduate study program, learning environment and education facilities provided by the institute. Lack of data taken in regular intervals to assess the progress of students' satisfaction about the quality of teaching, quality of the learning environment and quality of facilities, motivated the conduct of regular SSS among medical students at the Faculty of Medicine (FoM), University of Ruhuna (UoR). It is expected that the findings of these SSS would enable to monitor and provide valuable information regarding the quality of teaching and various student support services. In addition, the findings of SSS would benefit the university administrators in better decision-making, by prioritizing the requirements, in further developing the quality of learning environment of medical students.

In this context, the current study was designed to evaluate the study program and the learning environment of medical undergraduates at two different levels of their study program (after the third MBBS part 1 examination and after the final MBBS examination) through SSS and, to recommend the remedial measures for further development of the quality of the study program.

Methodology

Five Google Form based SSS were conducted at the FoM, UoR from September 2020 to May 2022. Three surveys were conducted for the final year medical students immediately after their final MBBS examination and two were conducted for the para-clinical students immediately after their 3rdMBBS part 1 examination.

The self-administered questionnaire used in this survey for SSS was developed by a Faculty Board approved subcommittee, which consisted of four academics with medical background, attached to the FoM. The questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the internal quality assurance cell (IQAC) and the Faculty Board of FoM, UoR. The questionnaire consisted of general information such as the year, batch number, number of students, gender and response rate. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections; quality of teaching was assessed by 12 questions using a five point scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree); quality of learning environment was assessed by four questions; and quality of facilities were assessed by 14 questions using a three-point scale (good, average and poor). Two yes/no type questions were used to assess the facilities given to differently abled students and the support provided in passing repeat exams. The approved SSS questionnaire was converted into a Google Form and the links were shared just after their respective exams through the WhatsApp groups among the students of each batch separately. The purpose and importance of the survey was informed to the students. A two-week period was given to respond the Google Form and a reminder was circulated through the batch representatives of each batch requesting to fill the Google Form. All data were collected anonymously.

Responses given by the five batches were analyzed separately using Microsoft Excel program. As some differences were noted between the two questionnaires only the questions that are similar to all five surveys were included for the analysis of this study. Data were presented as frequencies and percentages.

Results

The response rate in the five SSS from September 2020 to May 2022 were 28.9%, 39.6%, 64%, 15% and 10%, respectively. A gradual increase in the response rate during the first three surveys was observed. In subsequent surveys the response rate was dropped to 10%.. A majority of the respondents were female students 68.4% (range 65.5-78.3%) (Table1).

A majority of the students 78.3% (range 57.9-82.1%) reported, “Learning objectives and timetables are given before the commencement of the course” (Table 1).

All five surveys showed that the quality of teaching in the medical undergraduates is reasonably good, except for the teaching methods used and the support provided to pass the repeat examinations. A majority of the students provided the responses as 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' on"Lecturers begin and end lectures, tutorials and practical classes on time", "Lecturers encourage students to ask questions & participate" and "Lecturers know the subject matter of this course"(Data not shown in a table).

Table 1: Sample Characteristics and Medical Students' Responses for the Statements Given in the Questionnaire.

Sample variable		**2020 September**	**2021 March**	**2021 May**	**2022 February**	**2022 May**
Batch		36th	37th	40th	41st	38th
Examination		Final MBBS	Final MBBS	3rd MBBS Part I	3rd MBBS Part I	Final MBBS
Number of Students in the batch		159	169	175	193	190
Response rate (%)		28.93	39.64	64	15	10
Response rate	Male (%)	21.7	26.9	33.9	34.5	31.6
	Female (%)	78.3	73.1	66.1	65.5	68.4
Statement	**% Response to statements in the SSS questionnaire**					
Learning objectives and time tables are given before the commencement of the course	Yes (%)	78.3	80.6	82.1	-	57.9
	No (%)	21.7	19.4	17.9	-	42.1
Have you failed an exam during your MBBS programme?	Yes (%)	23.9	32.8	32.1	20.7	21.1
	No (%)	76.1	67.2	67.9	79.3	78.9
Did you have any disability (may be temporary) during your undergraduate period?	Yes (%)	2.2	10.4	6.3	24.1	15.8
	No (%)	97.8	89.6	93.7	75.9	84.2
If yes, are you satisfied with the support you received from the faculty to continue your learning activities?	Yes (%)	100	63	82	59	71
	No (%)	0	37	18	41	29

A majority of students rated the facilities such as lecture halls, library, IT unit, Dean's office, student affairs unit, student counseling unit, hostel and clinical skills lab either "good" or "average". The other facilities were received "average" or "poor" rating (Data not shown in the table).

Students were invited to report the disabilities and, 10.4% (2.2-24.1%) of the students reported some kind of disabilities.

Of the students with disabilities, a majority 71.4% (58.6-100%) of the students reported that they are satisfied with the support received from the faculty to continue their learning activities (Table 1).

Conclusion

These findings would be beneficial for the university administrators in developing strategies to improve the quality of medical education.

One of the limitations of the current SSS is the low response rate to the Google Form questionnaire. Plausible reasons for students' low response rate with time to the SSS and self-reported high disability rates needs to be identified. Another limitation is that lack of open-ended questionnaire to express students' ideas because there is a possibility of leaving out some important components under each item. Therefore, findings of the current SSS should be further supported by a new survey with modified-questionnaire.

References

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