

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Disruptive behaviour in classroom – Medical students' perception

Shumaila Zia^{1,2}

ABSTRACT

Background: For the conducive learning environment learners and teachers are expected to behave optimally. Disruptive behaviours of students are a thorny issue in everyday classroom. For teachers these behaviours are intolerable, stress provoking and responsible for medical educator's burnout. On the other hand, teacher's misbehaviours also hinder the smoothness and effectiveness of learning and impede the learning of the students.

Aim: To determine the perception of students regarding their own and faculty's disruptive classroom behaviour.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at Private Medical College in Lahore on the final year medical students during the month of May 2018. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The data was managed by using SPSS version 25.

Results: A remarkable difference was noted in students' perception regarding their own and faculty's disruptive behaviour. Female students were more sensitive regarding gravity of disruptive behaviour. Regarding their own, students agreed with 35% items while about faculty they labelled 90% items as disruptive behaviour. Sleeping in class (48%), demanding special treatment from the faculty and not putting cell phone on silent mode (44%) were common disruptive behaviour of the students. Humiliating behaviour (87%), unintelligible voice and unavailability of teachers outside the class (81%) were reported by students as common disruptive behaviour of the faculty.

Conclusion: Regarding disruptive behaviour students were more sensitive about teachers' dealing while gave cold shoulder to their own conduct.

Key words: *Disruptive behaviour, classroom behaviour, incivility, faculty, medical students, perception*

Introduction: Learners have their fundamental right to have a safe and respectful environment for learning (Mabeba MZ, 2000). Feldman defines classroom incivility as "any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom" (Feldmann, 2001). Inappropriate behaviour is considered as problematic but not necessarily, seriously ill disciplined, even then it is disturbing in the classroom setting e.g. sleeping in class, talking, chatting, lesson disruption, and rude body language towards the teacher are named as 'problem behaviours' (Ho, 2004), "behaviour problems," (Wheldall & Merrett, 1988) or 'disruptive behaviours'.

There are a variety of ways students behave in a disruptive manner. Some are minor and often ignorable, but a few types of disruptive behaviours go beyond rudeness. Disruptive students interfere not only with the teacher's ability to teach effectively but also require large amounts of the

teacher's time and attention. The teachers need to stop the lesson or discussion to address this behaviour which takes away from them, the precious time to teach the rest of the class. This may affect the efficiency of the other students as well. Constant interruptions can interfere with focus. This leads to less academic engaged time and students' poor performance in assessments (Johnson, 2006). It also results in "disappointment, stress, burnout and poor efficiency of teachers" (Lewis, 1999).

Faculty often ranks disruptive behaviour as one of the most serious challenges in effective teaching /learning process in the classroom. Therefore, it is a matter of great concern for the teachers. Students also get irritated with faculty members whom they consider to be bad communicators, and as a result behave disrespectfully. Clark (2008) in his study described humiliation of students, intimidation by faculty and high expectations from students, as disruptive behaviours of the faculty. In the aforementioned study, many students considered the misuse of power as the main offender. Thus, increased focus on this category to find effective solutions will open vistas for a better relationship between teacher and student, and leads to a favourable teaching environment (Clark, 2008). This study is an attempt to find out the perception of medical students regarding theirs and teacher's disruptive behaviours in class room leading to non-conductive learning

1. Department of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Azra Naheed Medical College, Lahore, Pak

2. Department of Medical Education, University of Lahore, Pak
Correspondence: Dr. Shumaila Zia
abecharafique@hotmail.com

environment. Student's viewpoint about the issue may help the educators to successfully develop means of reducing the prevalence of such incivilities.

Methodology: This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted at Azra Naheed Medical College, Lahore in month of June 2018. A total of 106 students of final years MBBS were recruited who gave consent for participation in the study. For anonymity and confidentiality students were asked to avoid mentioning their names. A questionnaire comprising of two sections was used to collect data. The first section had questions regarding student's disruptive behaviours and that was taken from Rowland and Srisukho (2009) and was used after getting authors' permission. The second section regarding teacher's incivility was self-prepared. Six incompletely filled proformas were excluded from the study data. First part of the questionnaire was consisted of 20 questions about student's disruptive classroom behaviour. The students' opinion about uncivil behaviour was noted on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree). The second section was related to teachers' disruptive behaviour consisting of 17 questions. The students' opinion regarding disruptive behaviour of the faculty as a problem was noted on a four-point Likert scale (1=serious problem, 2= problem, 3= I don't know, 4= No problem).

Because of small numbers of responses for each option in data management, the response categories "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were collapsed into one i.e. "disagree." likewise, the response categories "strongly agree" and "agree" were collapsed into one i.e. "agree." Thus, two response categories were used for data analysis (disagree and agree). The chi-square test or Fisher's exact test was used to compare the statistically significant differences in responses.

Data was managed by using the Statistical package for social sciences software (SPSS version 25).

Comparison among groups was done using analysis of variance. A chi-square test was applied for comparison among items of the questionnaire. $P < 0.05$ was considered to be statistically significant. The project was approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Results: Regarding disruptive behaviour of students:

Out of total 106 participants, 48 were male. Mean age was 22.9 (range: 12-26) years. Sleeping in class was the most common disruptive behaviour considered by 48%. The most insignificant act considered to be disruptive by 74% students was leaving the class early. Sixty three percent students did not consider use of cell phone in class as disrupted behaviour. Sixty percent of the students thought that coming late in class and playfully mocking instructor is not a disrupted behaviour.

Using internet in class was not considered an objectionable act by 58%, while 34% opinion was opposite and 8% did not respond. Challenging teacher authority and acting bored was taken as disruptive behaviour by 31%, 56% disagreed with this opinion and 13% were non-decisive. Using cell phone and leaving class early was considered least disruptive by male students as compared to female ones. (Table-1). Sleeping in class, talking out of turn, not putting cell phone-on silent mode during class and examination was disliked comparatively more by female students.

Among the students, there was a statistically significant difference in perceptions of uncivil behaviour being "agree" and "disagree" for the following variables. "Using cell phone" ($p = 0.002$), "challenging authority of teacher" ($p = 0.007$), having mentality of "I paid for it" ($p = 0.05$), "playfully mocking instructor" ($p = 0.003$), "arriving late in class" ($p = 0.007$), "inattentive in class" ($p = 0.002$), "acting bored and apathetic" ($p = 0.01$) and "using internet in class" ($p = 0.01$).

Regarding disruptive behaviour by teachers

Humiliating/taunting and belittling behaviour by teacher is considered to be the most serious issue by all students. Unclear or non-understandable voice of the teacher is taken as second most significant issue by the students. Faculty's leaving the class early and straying away from topic during class is least serious problem for the students. Being distant or cold behaviour towards students is considered to be serious problem by female student, which is significantly different from male students' point of view. Being inflexible/rigid and punishing the class for one student's misbehaviour is again significantly serious problem ($p < 0.05$) for girls. Non-availability of faculty outside the class is taken as a serious problem by girls while male students did not think so. Faculty's unpreparedness for class is a problem for both gender of students but girls think about it with more gravity ($p < 0.05$). Lack of passion for own discipline by teacher as well as his/her flexibility for students' disruptive behaviour and restriction on open discussion of students is not a significant issue for male student ($P < 0.05$) as compared to their female counterparts.

Discussion: Indeed, students' disrespectful attitude is a flourishing problem (Karimi Moonaghi, Rad, & Torkmannejad Sabzevari, 2014, Robertson, 2012). This kind of behaviour is prevalent both in students and faculty, yet their viewpoints in this regard are different (Luparell, 2011, Feldmann, 2001). High standards of ethics are essential part of medical profession (Swick, 2000) and professionalism is the vital part of clinical practice. (Hafeez, Khan, Jawaaid, & Haroon, 2013). Managing uncivil classroom behaviour is a tough job for the faculty members, and this academic incivility not only

seriously disrupts the learning environment but also faculty–student relationship. Clark (2008) says, “Disruptive behaviour of faculty also has deep effect on student’s learning process. Such behaviour not only has profound impacts on their self-confidence and independence but also on their bodies” (Cynthia Clark, 2008).

In a quantitative study by Satyanrayana, et al they took perception of students and teachers regarding disruptive behaviour and they found that the female students considered cheating in class and challenging the instructor’s credibility as significant disruptive behaviour (Satyanrayana et al 2017). Our results are almost similar and female students considered sleeping in class, challenging instructor credibility demanding special privileges from teacher and leaving cell phone on as a disruptive behaviour. Male students in the similar study considered demanding special treatment, missing the deadline, sleeping in class and arriving late to class as uncivil behaviours. While male students in our study also considered similar behaviour as uncivil except missing the deadline of the assignment. Some of the male students in our study though mentioned missing deadline for work as disruptive behaviour in consistence with Ballard (2015) study. Ballard et al. (2015) and Shetty et al. (2016) found that making offensive remarks, challenging instructor knowledge and cheating were perceived as uncivil by the female students, which is also consistent with our findings (Shetty A, 2016, Ballard & Hagan 2015,)

Satyanrayana (2017), and Shetty (2016) mentioned that postgraduate students perceived not paying attention, sleeping in class, leaving the clinic early, missing deadlines, and dominating discussions. We found that student’s ranked disruptive behaviour in the descending order of sleeping in class, demanding special treatment, leaving cell phone on, challenging teachers’ knowledge and repeated inter-student conversation. There is some difference in frequency of these findings which may be due to maturity of under graduate and post graduate students.

In our study one item, sleeping in class was the most uncivil behaviour perceived by the students although it was not statistically significant. In another work by Rowland and Srisukho (2009), missing deadlines was observed the most disruptive behaviour. They also found that the female instructors considered missing deadlines and sleeping in class as most uncivil behaviour which is consistent with our findings. This signifies that female gender is more sensitive about these behaviour whether being students or faculty (Rowland & Srisukho, 2009).

Clark and Springer in a qualitative study at a nursing institution asked the students about incivilities of faculty in

classroom and found that making condescending remarks about students, having a poor teaching style and poor communication skills, taking an attitude of superiority, criticizing students in front of the class, and making threats to fail students were considered significant incivilities. Our findings regarding disruptive behaviour by the faculty in classroom was cited as taunting behaviour (87%), being unavailable outside the class (82%), poor teaching and communication skill (81), reluctant to answer questions and poor classroom management skill (77%), being unprepared for class (71%) and cancelling class without intimation (70%). Some differences in results between two studies may be due to different type of institutions and methodology (CM Clark, 2007).

In an Iranian study at a Nursing school, students expressed that wastage of class time and distraction, inadequate classroom management, humiliating, threatening and discriminating behaviour, poor assessment and inappropriate communication with students and colleagues were the most important themes. The findings of our work have similarities as well as differences compared to this study (Ildarabadi, Moharreri, & Moonaghi, 2015). In this study, discrimination and poor assessment by the faculty were the main themes while belittling and unavailability of teacher outside the class was found as disruptive behaviour by our students. This difference in the findings may be due to different questionnaire and methodology.

Exactly similar to our result, Kalantari et al, in their study found “humiliation of students” the most significant theme. Some other students’ behaviours detected in that study were “mistrust, lack of praise after achievement, cold behaviour, use of inappropriate words, having a bad opinion of students, disrespect towards the field, and being unpunctual,” some of which are in line with our work (Kalantari, Hekmatafshar, Jouybari, & Sanagoo, 2012). There are similarities among this work and many other similar studies. It shows that in spite of cultural differences, the expectations of students from their teachers are almost same around the globe.

To enhance the awareness regarding incivility and its mental and social effects, further detailed studies are essential. Community awareness about disruptive behaviour is necessary to ameliorate such behaviour which has negative impact on the academic learning environment. Preventive measures are vital to root out such behaviour from the learning academic environment which is prevalent in the institutions around the globe.

Limitation: Sample from single institution and small in number is a limitation of our study. Other limitations may be shortage of time to complete the questionnaire and personal

Table 1: Students' perception regarding their own disruptive behaviour

S#	Disruptive behavior	Agree	Disagree	χ^2
1	Using cell phone during class	30	63	0.002
2	Challenging authority in class	31	56	0.007
3	Demanding special privileges (treatment) from faculty members	44	47	0.753
4	Having an "I paid for this" mentality	36	54	0.057
5	Leaving the class before the teacher	21	74	0.000
6	Making offensive remarks/ gestures	32	60	0.003
7	Missing the deadline for work	39	50	0.243
8	Prolonged conversation that distract other students and teacher	41	52	0.254
9	Reading or studying non-related class material during lecture	37	55	0.06
10	Sleeping in class	48	50	0.839
11	Talking out of turn	36	53	0.071
12	Arriving late to class	34	60	0.007
13	Not paying attention in class	32	61	0.002
14	Acting bored or apathetic	33	56	0.014
15	Reluctance to answer questions in class	40	50	0.291
16	Using computer in class to surf the web/others	34	58	0.012
17	Questioning their instructor's knowledge	42	46	0.669
18	Cheating in class	37	61	0.002
19	Challenging the instructor's credibility	41	50	0.345
20	Do not keeping cell phone on silent mode during lecture	44	48	0.676

Table 2 Students' perception about disruptive behaviour of faculty

S#	Question	Gender	Serious Problem	Problem	I don't know	No Problem	P-Value
1	Belittling or taunting students through sarcasm, humiliation, intimidation.	Male	22	20	4	2	0.45
		Female	31	14	4	3	
2	Being distant or cold toward students	Male	9	17	6	16	0.002
		Female	24	20	4	4	
3	Being inflexible, being rigid, or punishing the class for one student's misbehavior	Male	8	22	4	14	0.22
		Female	15	30	1	6	
4	Being unavailable outside of class	Male	19	17	5	7	0.04
		Female	27	19	1	5	
5	Refusing or being reluctant to answer questions	Male	16	18	5	9	0.41
		Female	17	26	2	7	
6	Being unprepared for class	Male	15	14	4	15	0.04
		Female	13	29	3	7	
7	Making statements about being disinterested in the subject matter	Male	10	20	5	13	0.048
		Female	10	27	11	4	
8	Ignoring disruptive student behaviors	Male	16	16	6	10	0.04
		Female	16	29	1	6	
9	Not speaking clearly or not being understandable	Male	16	19	2	11	0.09
		Female	28	18	2	4	
10	Canceling class without warning	Male	11	20	0	17	0.417
		Female	16	23	1	12	
11	Delivering fast-paced, uninvolved lectures	Male	9	18	7	14	0.18
		Female	16	23	6	7	
12	Not allowing open discussion	Male	17	11	5	15	0.02
		Female	14	27	2	9	
13	Arriving late for class	Male	9	16	5	18	0.63
		Female	8	24	4	16	
14	Deviating from the course syllabus or changing assignments or test dates	Male	9	23	2	14	0.43
		Female	10	22	7	13	
15	Refusing to allow make-up examinations, extensions, or grade changes	Male	12	15	8	12	0.10
		Female	16	24	2	10	
16	Leaving class early	Male	8	14	7	19	0.139
		Female	7	10	3	32	
17	Move away from class topic	Male	11	18	2	17	0.385
		Female	7	16	4	25	

understanding of the questions by the students.

Conclusion: About half of the student disagreed most of the potentially disruptive behaviour attributes regarding themselves. On the other hand, they have severe criticism on their teachers' disruptive behaviour. For healthy learning environment both students as well as teachers should realize and modify their behaviour to meliorate the critical problem of disruptive behaviour in the academic environment.

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