

Students' Perception of Lecturers' Behaviors in the Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the perception of undergraduate students about their lecturers' behaviours in their learning environment. Behaviour is the explanation of observable outcomes and interaction between students and instructors. Behaviour can be positive, negative, effective or ineffective, and the way in which lecturers behave with their students in the learning environment may affect their learning experience and motivation. A Quantitative research design was employed in conducting the study. A questionnaire with 27 items was used to collect data from 140 randomly selected respondents from Takhar University, Afghanistan. SPSS version 25.0 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, i.e., Independent Samples *t*-test and One-Way ANOVA were employed in data analysis. The findings indicate that the students had a positive perception about their lecturers' behaviours in the learning environment. The study also revealed that there did not appear to be any statistically significant differences in participants' responses by their gender or the classes they took. The findings of the current study may lead to policies with regard to lecturers' behaviours and inform instructors to improve classroom practices in the learning environment.

Key words: Perception, Lecturers' Behaviour, Students' Achievement, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is an activity which helps the generation to acquire new knowledge and improve their character, literacy and skills. It is the core principle of communities' development in the world. On the other hand, teaching is a process in which an individual guides others to develop their talents and literacy. It is considered as an important action of imparting instruction to learners (Merchant et al., 2014; Akramy, 2020; Bhat & Khandai, 2016). One of the most influential factors that impacts teaching and learning is the lecturer, defined here as a professional or an academic expert working in higher educational institutions, who helps students in the learning process (Stork & Hartley, 2009). In a learning environment, lecturers' behaviour plays an important role in helping students to achieve the expected learning outcomes of their courses or programs (Orfan et al., 2021).

Behaviour is anything that is done by a person, whether overt or covert. It can be explained as an understandable and recognizable action (Noori et al., 2020; Fernandez, 2020). It is a kind of relationship which involves the chain of interaction between parties (Akkaya, 2019). It is the response of a person to a particular condition, which has a direct impact on the individual's outcome (Levesque, 2014). In social psychology, it can be explained as an outlook by positively or negatively reacting to the situation, which will happen

in different forms (Pearce, 2013; Orfan & Noori, 2021; Hareket, 2021). This study divides lecturers' behaviour into three categories: i) Professional, ii) Communicational, and iii) Physical. Malesky and Peters (2012) indicated that lecturers' professional behaviour focuses specifically on how they conduct their lessons in educational institutions. Communicational behaviour is described as a psychological construct which impacts individual differences in the expression of needs, thoughts and feelings (Hosseininia et al., 2016). According to Ampadu (2012), communication behaviour is how the lecturers are interconnected with their students; it can convey a message from one person to another. Physical behaviour is the description of activities performed by individuals throughout the day (Fuhrmann, 2014). Physical behaviour can be described with examples such as interaction with students, dressing up formally and coming to class, being anxious or happy in the classroom, considering all the students equal and not showing any form of discrimination between the students (Levesque, 2014).

Student experience in institutions of learning can be greatly affected by their lecturers' behaviours, even up to the point where these behaviours may affect students' learning outcomes (Aksoy, 2020). Rahman (2013) stated that lecturers' positive behaviour and teaching habits in the learning environment have a direct impact on students' academic achievement and learning preference like retaining, processing,

absorbing and comprehending information. In general, the main behaviour patterns that are exhibited by lecturers are punishing, rewarding, accommodating, criticizing or requiring approach (Akareem & Hossain, 2012; Yildirim et al., 2020; Getachew, 2019). Furthermore, Leoanak and Amalo (2018) found that lecturers as humans may behave differently based on the circumstances and the leading features of lecturers' behaviour are their character, personality and ability to effectively communicate in the learning environment.

Lecturers' behaviours may differ from country to country and from culture to culture. Quaynor (2012) stated that in developed societies, lecturers may have better facilities and are trained well. Alp et al. (2011) found out that lecturers in post-conflict countries behaved more aggressively than those in developed ones since war and instabilities had mental and psychological impact on them. Other factors have a large impact on students' attitudes towards learning. For example, Orfan (2020) found out that the students' attitudes with access to the Internet towards learning English was more positive than those without access to the Internet. Positive attitudes towards learning play a significant part on helping students achieve the expected learning outcomes (Noori & Orfan, 2021).

Previous studies indicated that lecturers' behaviours highly impact students' learning. Stork and Hartley (2009) conducted a quantitative study and found that lecturers' misbehaviours influenced students' academic achievement. In another study Ali et al. (2009) found that some lecturers preferred to pass the course contents and only allow volunteering students to answer the questions, which negatively impacts the students' achievement and literacy level. Yildirim et al. (2020) conducted a study and found that the unethical behavior of teachers affects students learning outcome and literacy level. They argued that some teachers may not cooperate with colleagues, fail to make an effort to improve student's learning and literacy or have negative relationship with parents which do not match the organizational norms and standards. This study also found that the most unethical behavior of the teachers is their disrespectful behavior to stakeholders which directly and indirectly affects students' learning performance or literacy level.

Many studies documented lecturers' professionalism, behaviours, self-efficacy and student's motivation in other countries. Unfortunately, as of this moment, it would appear that no studies have been conducted in Afghanistan to investigate students' perception of their lecturers' behaviours, which significantly impact their learning. The current investigation is an attempt to eliminate this gap in the literature in the context of higher education in Afghanistan. It makes a contribution to an understanding of learning and teaching in higher education in Afghanistan. Furthermore, understanding the perception of students about their lecturers' behaviours is crucial, lecturers may adopt more positive behaviours in their teaching approaches, which will substantially affect students' learning. Its findings may lead to policies with regard to lecturers' behaviours in higher education institutes in Afghanistan. In addition, it offers insights on gender and class variables.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the perception of undergraduate students about their lecturers' behavior.
2. To determine the differences in the responses of the students by their demographic variables, i.e., gender and class.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design was employed in conducting the study and survey questionnaire was used in data collection. The study was carried out in Takhar University located in North-eastern Afghanistan. The study aimed to investigate the perception of Afghan undergraduate students about their lecturers' behaviour. The population of the study was 200 students in English Department of Takhar University. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling model, appropriate sample sizes were selected. To decrease sampling error, 140 students were chosen randomly as the sample of the study.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were 140 students who were majoring in English Language and Literature at Takhar University. They were between 18-27 years old at the time of the study. As Table 1, shows, there were equal numbers of female and male respondents (50%). They were studying in different classes (Table 1).

Data Collection Instrument

A survey questionnaire was used as a research instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was adapted from Shah (2009). The questionnaire contained two main parts and 27 items. The first part sought the demographic background of the respondents and part two elicited the participants' responses about lecturers' behaviour.

Validity and Reliability

The researchers shared the questionnaire with four lecturers in Takhar University for a review. In addition, it was checked and revised by a senior lecturer in Universiti Teknologi

Table 1. Demographics of the respondents

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	70	50
Female	70	50
Total	140	100
Class		
Freshman	38	27
Sophomore	36	26
Junior	35	25
Senior	31	22
Total	140	100

Malaysia. After receiving their feedback, the problematic items were revised accordingly. In terms of reliability, a pilot study was conducted before carrying out the main research. Thirty students were asked to fill out the questionnaire for the pilot study. Using SPSS version. 25.0, the reliability analysis of the questionnaire items was carried out. The results revealed the value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.804, which indicates high reliability (Table 2).

Data Collection

The researchers requested the dean of the Faculty of Language and Literature and the head of English Department to facilitate the meeting with the students. The researchers met with them and arranged four sessions for collecting the data. The purpose of the research was explained to the respondents in each session and they were informed that the participation in the study was completely voluntary. The respondents received a copy of the questionnaire along with the consent form. They were required to read and sign the consent form before completing the questionnaire. The researchers provided instruction on how to complete each section of the questionnaire and they were encouraged to ask for clarification. It took the respondents 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was anonymous and there was no item in the questionnaire that could identify the respondents. They were made sure of the confidentiality of their responses.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out with the aid of SPSS version 25.0. Descriptive statistics was used to determine the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation of the data. Moreover, inferential statistical analyses were conducted to determine difference between responses of the participants. Independent Samples T-test was used to explore the differences in the responses of two groups of the respondents, i.e., gender. One Way ANOVA was employed to determine the differences in the responses of more than two groups of the respondents, i.e., class.

RESULTS

Overall Perception of Students about their Lecturers' Behaviour

The results of descriptive statistics show that the overall mean score of the respondents' perception about their lecturer's behaviour is (M=3.8) and standard deviation is (SD=0.364). The results indicate that students have mild positive perception about their lecturers' behaviour. As Table 3 shows, there are not significant differences between three aspects of behaviour: professional, communicational and physical aspects.

Professional behaviour

The first 8 items of the questionnaire sought the participants' responses about professional behaviour of lecturers.

As Table 3 shows, the professional behaviour has the second highest mean score (3.84). Moreover, over 55% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statements that enquired their perception about their lecturers' behavior (Table 4). Therefore, it is concluded that students have mild positive perception about professional behaviour of their lecturers.

Communicational behaviour

The second seven items elicited the participants' responses about their lecturers' communicational behaviour. As Table 3 shows, communicational behaviour has the highest mean score (3.98). As Table 5 shows, over 65% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statements that sought the participants' response about their communicational behaviour. For instance, around 73% of the respondents stated that their lecturers encouraged them for co-curricular activities. Thus

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha results

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.804	0.827	24

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of three aspects of behaviour

Aspects of behaviour	n	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional behaviour	140	3.84	.528
Communicational behaviour	140	3.98	.489
Physical behaviour	140	3.61	.411
Overall mean	140	3.81	.361

Table 4. Percentage of students' perception about their lecturers' professional behaviour

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. My lecturers come to the class with enough preparation.	2.9	5.7	8.6	51.4	31.4
2. My lecturers give me enough assignments.	3.6	10.0	12.9	50.0	23.6
3. My lecturers use reference books.	8.6	15.0	17.9	33.6	25.0
4. My lecturers use different teaching techniques.	1.4	2.9	12.9	40.7	42.1
5. My lecturers use different assessment techniques.	6.4	8.6	14.3	49.3	21.4
6. My lecturers use tests only for promoting students.	7.1	13.6	15.7	36.4	27.1
7. My lecturers are punctual in their duties.	2.1	3.6	12.9	55.7	25.7
8. My lecturers make class conducive for the learning.	5.7	6.4	14.3	41.4	32.1

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

the authors conclude that students' perception about their lecturers' communicational behaviour is mildly positive.

Table 5. Percentage of students' perception about their lecturers' communicational behaviour

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I enjoy being friendly with my lecturers.	0.7	4.3	4.3	30.0	60.7
2. My lecturers share their personal experiences with the class.	4.3	12.9	17.9	41.4	23.6
3. My lecturers admire me when I perform well.	1.4	6.4	8.6	44.3	39.3
4. My lecturers encourage me for co- curricular activities.	8.6	9.3	9.3	42.9	30.0
5. My lecturers explain difficult points of the lesson.	3.6	3.6	9.3	53.6	30.0
6. My lecturers relate the topic with real life situations.	2.9	6.4	13.6	49.3	27.9
7. My lecturers provide me with constructive feedback.	1.4	6.4	19.3	45.7	27.1

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

Table 6. Percentage of students' perception about their lecturers' physical behaviour

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. My lecturers are friendly and available for me.	0.0	8.6	15.0	47.9	28.6
2. My lecturers insult us in front of the whole class.	35.7	20.0	16.4	17.9	10.0
3. My lecturers behave nicely with me.	7.1	16.4	17.9	36.4	22.1
4. My lecturers dress up formally and nicely.	2.9	9.3	11.4	43.6	32.9
5. My lecturers are anxious when I ask questions.	33.6	25.0	9.3	20.7	11.4
6. My lecturers motivate me by different techniques.	2.9	11.4	17.1	47.9	20.7
7. My lecturers come to the class with a happy mood.	2.1	6.4	15.0	47.1	29.3
8. My lecturers focus on character building of me.	2.9	6.4	19.3	49.3	22.1
9. My lecturers do not show any discrimination	14.3	11.4	15.7	33.6	25.0

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

Physical behaviour

The last nine items aimed to seek the participants' responses about their physical behaviour. It has the lowest mean score (3.6087). Over 55% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the positive statements that required the participants' responses about their lecturers' physical behaviour. Furthermore, over 55% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the negative statements that elicited the participants' responses about their lecturers' physical behaviour. Therefore, it is concluded that students have positive perception about their lecturers' physical behaviour (Table 6).

Respondents' Demographic Profile

The researchers discuss how the demographic factors, i.e., gender and class affect their perceptions about their lecturers' behaviours. Descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted to explore the impact of the respondents' gender and class on their perception about their lecturers' behaviour.

Gender

The results of Independent Samples T-test (Table 7) show that the p value is 0.466, which is greater than the alpha level. Thus, it is concluded that there are not statistically significant differences in the participants' responses by their gender.

Class

One-Way ANOVA test was conducted to determine whether the respondents' class had any impact on their perception about their lecturers' behaviour. As Table 8 demonstrates, the p value (0.646) is greater than the alpha level, which does not indicate any statistical differences. Therefore, it is concluded that the respondents' class did not have any statistically significant differences on their perception about their lecturers' behaviour.

DISCUSSION

Behaviour is the response of a person to a particular situation. In the classroom context, lecturers' behaviour is the interaction between students and the lecturer. For example, a lecturer asks a question and the student says "I do not know the answer". In this case, the student has a verbal behaviour. The findings showed that the students had a mild positive perception about their lecturers' behaviour. The findings of this study supported the studies conducted by Samian and Noor (2012), Ugurlu (2008) and Oishi (2014) who found

Table 7. Independent Samples t-test of students' perceptions about their lecturers' behaviour by their gender

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	.145	.704	138	.731	.466	.045	.06160

Table 8. The output of SPSS for NOVA Test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.222	3	.074	.555	.646
Within Groups	18.178	136	.134		
Total	18.400	139			

that the students had a positive perception about their lecturer's teaching behaviour. They also found out that the skills to deliver an effective lecture is more significant than other performance criteria. Uğurlu (2008) argued that the students observed teachers positively in the social and educational aspects, but more negative in term of their relationships with the students. It also found that teachers' good behavior highly impacts student's learning and literacy. However the finding of the study contradicts the study conducted by Köse and Demir (2014) who found that the students did not have a positive perception about their teachers' behaviors; stating that their teachers did not consider all the students equally and have unethical behavior in the learning environment. It also found that the students did not consider their teachers as role models because of their unfair behavior.

Furthermore, the results showed that there were statistically no significant differences in the perception of undergraduate students about their lecturers' behaviour by their gender. It also revealed that the respondents' class did not have any statistically significant effect on their perception about their lecturers' behaviour.

Therefore, at the university level, lecturers' good behaviour, competency, capability, effective use of teaching techniques, positive interaction and positive learning climate all affect students' achievement and motivation for learning. The research recommended that faculty members and instructors should improve their way of interaction and behaviour to help increasing student's motivation and learning outcome (Noori et al., 2020). Malaimak (2010), indicated that lecturers' behaviour could be changed and improved by training and capacity building programs. Therefore, it is suggested that educational managers and higher educational leaders should organize learning programs to improve instruction focusing on lecturers' behaviours increasing students' academic achievement and learning performance.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed at investigating the perception of Afghan undergraduate students about their lecturers' behaviour. Moreover, it explored the impact of students' demographic variables, i.e., gender and class on their responses. The finding of the study showed that the students had a positive perception about their lecturers' behavior. In addition, the results showed that there was no significant difference in the responses of the students regarding each aspect of behaviors. The study also revealed that there was no significant difference in the perception of Afghanistan undergraduate students about their lecturers' behaviour by their demographic variables, i.e, gender and class.

The study is important because the previous studies were limited and no study examined the problem suggesting policy for solution. However, lecturers' behavior affects students' achievement and learning motivation so that the educational managers and higher education leaders hold workshops and training programs to improve teaching and learning. The finding of the study will contribute to the body of knowledge and academic literature, it will also help in improving policies to change instructors' behavior so that it can enhance student's achievement and literacy.

There have been some limitations like, time constraint and respondents' availability because the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the participation of the respondents. Further studies may go deeply with the larger population and cover all educational levels.

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