

Attitude of medical students towards the reasons of absenteeism in a medical college of Tripura

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Abstract: Attendance of students is thought to be an important factor in the academic performance of medical students. It has also wider implications for institutions providing medical education. Teaching is necessary to develop competence. A common assumption in higher education is that absenteeism substantially contributed to low academic achievement. The class attendance is more important for enhancing grade rather than obtaining a pass mark. So, this study was conducted to investigate the attitude of first year medical students towards the reasons of absenteeism among them. The information had been collected by a pre-structured, pre-tested, pre-coded, semi open ended questionnaire. Likart scale had been used to measure the attitude. The present study revealed that 39.5% participants disagreed the absenteeism due to lack of interest in subjects or course. 36% participants disagreed that absenteeism due to inability of the mental capacity of the students to match the course or courses opted for. 55.8% participants agreed that absenteeism due to preparation for examination. The present study had evaluated various reasons for absenteeism among the students which will be contributing in further evaluation of other reasons for absenteeism among the medical students.

Key Words: Absenteeism, Attendance, Medical students.

I. Introduction

Student attendance is thought to be an important factor in the academic performance of medical students on the basis that clinical contact and teaching are necessary to develop competence. Student attendance also has wider implications for institutions providing medical education.¹ The ability of medical students to apply knowledge and skills learnt in real-context is an important outcome of medical education. However, a common assumption in higher education is that absenteeism substantially contributed to low academic achievement², thus eventually will hamper the expected outcomes of medical education. In general, researchers have established students with low absenteeism achieve higher academic performance in both coursework and examinations than students with high absenteeism.³ Likewise, the examination score was significantly affected by absenteeism^{4,5} and the class attendance is more important for enhancing grade rather than obtaining a pass mark.⁶ Therefore, this study was aimed to investigate the attitude of first year medical students towards the reasons of absenteeism among Medical students in a Medical College of Tripura.

II. Materials and method

After taking formal permission from the Ethical Committee of Tripura Medical College and Dr. B.R.A.M. Teaching Hospital, this questionnaire based cross-sectional study was conducted in Tripura Medical College and Dr. B.R.A.M. Teaching Hospital within 1 month (January, 2015). It was conducted among the 98 first year medical students of Tripura Medical College and Dr. B.R.A.M. Teaching Hospital. The undergraduate medical students, who were willing to participate, were included in this study. Those students, who had not given consent and not willing to participate, were excluded from the study. Information had been collected by a pre-structured, pre-tested, pre-coded, semi open ended questionnaire. Likart scale had been used to measure the attitude.

One hundred (100) first year M.B.B.S. students of 2014-2015 Batch of TMC & Dr. B.R.A.M. Teaching Hospital, Hapania, were informed and invited to participate in the study during the month of January 2015. The participation in the study was on voluntary basis. Those who refused to participate were excluded from the study. All participants were given a briefing about objective of the study and assured for confidentiality in collection of personal data. They were also told that this test was only to get their ideas and perspectives for educational research. Ninety eight (98) first year medical students, including girls and boys, had given consent

for participation and had been included in this present study. Written informed consent had been taken from them prior to the interview.

Data had been collected by administering the questionnaire to the 98 undergraduate medical students. Data analysis had been done manually as well as in epi info version 7.0. Data had been expressed in frequency and percentage.

III. Results

The present study was conducted among 98 students of 1st year MBBS of Tripura Medical College and Dr. B.R.A.M. Teaching Hospital.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the study participants.

Parameters		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)	17	2	2.0
	18	14	14.3
	19	52	53.1
	20	26	26.5
	21	4	4.1
Sex	Male	57	58.2
	Female	41	41.8
Religion	Hindu	92	93.9
	Muslim	1	1.0
	Christian	5	5.1
Community	General	59	60.2
	ST	12	12.2
	SC	15	15.3
	OBC	12	12.2

(ST-Schedule Tribe, SC-Schedule Caste, OBC-Other Backward Class).

The present study revealed that majority of the students (53.10%) was at 19 years of age. The study also showed that 58.20% of the participant students were male and 41.80% participants were female and most of them were Hindu by religion (93.90%) and belonged to General community (60.20%) (Table 1).

Table 2: Attitude of the study participants towards the reasons of absenteeism.

	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Neither Agreed or Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly Agreed
Lack of interest in subject or course	37.2%	39.5%	10.5%	8.1%	4.7%
Inability of the mental capacity to match the course opted for.	24.4%	36.0%	26.7%	10.5%	2.3%
Preparation for the examination	5.8%	4.7%	11.6%	55.8%	22.1%
Poor family relationship	53.5%	32.6%	9.3%	4.7%	0%
Excessive home work	9.3%	52.3%	24.4%	10.5%	3.5%
Poor teaching skills of teachers	16.3%	26.7%	31.4%	20.9%	4.6%
Transportation problems	20.9%	34.9%	12.8%	23.3%	8.1%

The present study revealed that 39.5% participants disagreed that absenteeism due to lack of interest in subjects or course. 36% participants disagreed that absenteeism due to inability of the mental capacity of the students to match the course or courses opted for. 55.8% participants agreed that absenteeism due to preparation for examination. 53.8% participants strongly disagreed that absenteeism due to poor family relationship. 53.2% participants disagreed that absenteeism due to excessive home work (Table 2).

IV. Discussion

The problem of students' absenteeism from lectures became the concern of every member of society because of its grievous consequences on the individual in particular and the society in general. The students skip classes because student-centred, home, school and society related causes.⁷ Literature suggested that the reasons for poor attendance were not easy to determine as it was a complex and sensitive issue. Many factors influenced over an individual's decision for coming to lectures or not.

Absenteeism from lectures most of the time because of academic related reasons like poor teaching skills of lecturers leading to boring lectures, lecturers not turning up for scheduled lectures. It was followed by students' personal reasons like lack of interest in subjects or courses, inability of the mental capacity of students to match the course or courses opted for. Home related causes like working to meet up the daily needs for the

family, poor family relationships and lastly by society related causes such as low societal value for education, transportation problems were also identified as the reasons for absenteeism in classes.⁷

In present study, 20.9% participants agreed and 4.6% participates strongly agreed the poor skill of teachers as for absenteeism in lecture classes. 8.1% participants agreed that there was lack of interest in subject or course, whereas only 4.7% strongly agreed for same reason. Poor family relation was minor cause (strongly disagreed-0%) for absenteeism. Transport problem also was minimal reason found in this study.

A potential role in better academic outcome was the consistency in performance with good attendance. The vast medical curriculum principally dealt with knowledge, skills and attitude which can only be learnt by observation and practice. It was to be imparted in a limited span of time which mandated a strict attendance in classes.⁸

Student related factors indicated that maximum students agreed that preparation for internal exams is the commonest reason for absenteeism (78.50%).⁹ Similar was observed in present study, as a major reason of absenteeism where 55.8% and 22.1% participants agreed and strongly agreed respectively. The reasons were followed by the transportation problem.

Quality of lecture as perceived by students was also found to be a significant factor for low level of attendance among students.¹⁰ The teacher and teaching related factors identified with higher percentage (64.67%).⁹ In present study, poor teaching skill of the teachers was agreed by 20.9% participants whereas only 4.6% strongly agreed for the same reason. The lecturers should try to respond to the problem of students' absenteeism by exploring creative techniques to increase class attendance. The students should also realise that their attendances at lectures have significant roles for the teaching learning process to be effective.⁷

V. Conclusion

Attendance and academic performance are directly correlated. Medical education requires in-person, active engagement among students and teachers. Active engagement of the students should be there to overcome the major challenges in absenteeism. The present study had evaluated various reasons for absenteeism among the students which will be contributing in further evaluation of other reasons for absenteeism among the medical students.

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