Author's response to reviews

Title: Medical student and academic staff perceptions of role models: an analytical cross-sectional study

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Dear Editorial board

I highly appreciate for valuable comments of the reviewers. I amended the paper according to some of the proposed suggestions. Please find my responses to reviewers' comments as follow:

Reviewer: Myriam Deveugele

Comment

The reviewer asked about the validity and reliability of the data collection checklist and suggested using a five point Likert scale.

Response

Based on these valuable comments, I added some more explanation about the data collection checklist in the second paragraph of the method and material section with two references. Nonetheless, to clarify the issue, I am writing more details here.

This checklist was generated based on long experiences and the results of a few studies. In fact, the items were mostly borrowed from some checklists which are being used in some of medical colleges in Iran to evaluate the performance of their academic lecturers. Formally, from 4 years ago, the performances of all of lectures in Kerman University of Medical Sciences have been assessed based on the feedback of students. By now, two papers were published in Persian language journals on the validity of the checklist and the authors of this paper had significant contributions in developing the checklist, checking its validity and reliability and writing those two papers. Unfortunately, those papers are in Persian.

In addition, we completely agree with the reviewer that conceptuality the items are correlated. In fact, this paper aimed to check the correlation between items. We assessed the pattern of these correlations using statistical methods and we believe that the patterns of these associations are interesting. I need to add that the concept of these items may differ in Persian language; we had long discussion with two experts in English to use the best English words to transfer the exact meanings of the items from Persian to English. Nevertheless, we believe that the items should be interpreted in the social and cultural context.

Regarding the scale of questions, we agree that 5 point Likert scale is appropriate in many cases. However, we did not used this scale in this study because

A. We asked respondents to response to 345 questions (23 lecturer*15 items). The number of questions forced us to simplify the questioner to encourage the respondents to fill the form and increase the validity of their responses.

B. In addition, based on a small pilot study we found that respondents mostly chose the middle points in 3 or 5 point scale. Therefore, we decided to use a scale with 2 or 4 choices rather than 3 or 5 point scales.

C. We do not believe that the score of lecturers computed based on 5 point scale is a real numeric variable
to be used in parametric statistical models.

Based on the above reasons and according to our experiences in previous studies, we decided to ask the respondents to tick corresponding cells if only they were confident that the lecturer had any of those characteristics.

Comment

The reviewer suggested using kappa to check the agreement between students’ and staff’s responses and mentioned that Pearson correlation coefficient is not the appropriate.

Response

Kappa is one of the well-know indices to assess the agreement between the responses of two raters. In this study, we had many raters (students and staff who assessed lecturers). Therefore, we strongly believe that Pearson correlation coefficient is the best simple statistics to show the correlation between students’ and staff’s responses.

Reviewer: Kristi Ferguson

Comment

Skip Figure 1, especially since none of the correlations described is statistically significant.

Response

Although, none of the correlations were significant, we believe this figure compares the correlations between students' and staff's responses in different items which is very important. For example, two items of knowledgeable and professional are directly in related to the teachings process and we think it is useful that the readers can find their correlations and compare with the correlation coefficients in other items.

Comment

Correct the spelling of "questionnaire".

Response

Many thanks. We did this correction.

Comment

Acknowledge the small sample size in the discussion.

Response

We did, the third paragraph of the discussion is about this limitation.

Comment

On Table 3, indicate who the respondents are for each row in the table.

Response

We added the title.
Comment
In the third paragraph of the introduction, say that this might help faculty improve students' perceptions about the quality of their teaching. How students perceive the quality of teaching is one indicator, but not the only one.

Response
I did not understand clearly what the reviewer mean? Please write me if you think I should change that paragraph.

I should mention that the English errors in the paper have been corrected. I hope you satisfy with its language.