

Intellectual wellness in medical university teachers: Gender based comparison

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Abstract

A cross section, questionnaire based study was carried out from January 2012 till December 2014 to compare intellectual wellness (IW) awareness on the basis of gender in teachers of basic sciences at medical universities of Karachi, Pakistan. Data was collected from 3 public and 5 private medical universities of Karachi, Pakistan. Questionnaire was tailored from "Wellness Wheel" and responses were aggregated for eight questions in the dimension of IW to obtain aggregate IW score. Reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The average intellectual score was 24.99 ± 3.93 with a minimum score of 8 and maximum 32. The frequency of keeping informed about research updates was significantly higher in males ($p = 0.043$) that emphasized significantly better IW awareness of male medical teachers involved in teaching of medical sciences in both public and private medical universities of Pakistan.

Keywords: Wellness, Intellectual Wellness, Medical teachers, Wellness wheel, Pakistan.

Introduction

Wellness is an active life-long process of becoming aware of choices and making decisions towards a more balanced and fulfilling life.¹ Intellectual wellness (IW) is a state in which mind is engaged in creating opportunities to learn more and develop greater understanding, application of learned knowledge and lively interactions with the world around oneself.² Awareness of IW can keep a balance between job demand and job control, with a positive healthy behaviour in their students to motivate them to achieve their educational goals.³

The literature search related to teachers' wellness revealed that most of the studies are conducted on working conditions and stress and anxiety levels of school and university teachers, mostly in western countries.⁴ The awareness of IW has been explored in medical students but very few studies are available on wellness status of

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medical teachers.⁵ In view of the importance of the role played by teachers in preparing the future medical graduates with all required competencies, this study was planned to assess awareness of IW of medical teachers and to find out if there is any association with gender.

Subjects and Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted from January 2012 till December 2014 in 5 private and 3 public medical universities of Karachi after ethical approval and permission from all the institutes. The close-ended questionnaire on IW was tailored from "Wellness wheel" (Vanderbilt University).⁶ The questionnaire was pretested and verified (validated) on a group of 50 teachers; tailored in an attempt to know acceptability of teachers to accept the transition from conventional to problem-based learning. Instead of "I am interested in learning new things" the question was asked; "I add variety and interest in my teaching skills". The wellness wheel item; "I try to keep abreast of current affairs — locally, nationally, and internationally" was asked as; "I keep myself well informed in updates of researches" and "I am involved in research projects". As an alternative of asking about creative and stimulating mental activities/games we asked; "I have the ability to adapt to changes and accept challenges". The questions "I never hesitate to clarify unclear concepts even from my juniors" and "I accept healthy criticism on my presentations" were asked instead of "I make an effort to improve my verbal and written skills" and "enjoy engaging in intellectual discussions". Initially, we could not find any related study for sample size calculation, however conventional rules from statistical literature and rule of thumb, we calculated to take 5 samples for each variable in the study and the sample size was calculated to be 275. We approached 300 participants but ended up with 261 filled questionnaires.

A total of 320 forms were distributed in public and private medical universities with a ratio of 1.5. The faculty was informed about the purpose of the study and written consent was acquired. The responses were obtained in 4-points Likert scale as 1: never, 2: sometimes, 3: usually and 4: always, responses of each individual were aggregated to know perception of medical teachers about participation in reading and intellectual discussions, creative and mental activities, use of resources to acquire

knowledge about new things and current, selection of movies and enhancement of intellectual capabilities for continuing medical educational programmes. At first, descriptive statistics were obtained and then scores were compared by Mann-Whitney U test.

Results

A response rate of 87% with participation of 261 teachers was obtained. The average age of participants was 35.1 ± 10.2 years. There were 175 female (67.1%) and 86 male (32.9%). The overall score of IW of medical university teachers was 24.99 ± 3.93 ; score of male medical teachers was better on seeking information in updates of researches and receiving feed back from the juniors ($p < 0.05$). Table-1 shows that the frequency of keeping informed about research updates was significantly higher in males ($P = 0.043$) than females. Hesitation to clarify unclear concepts

was also found significantly more among males ($P = 0.037$). Teachers of both genders from private medical university had significantly higher frequency of being well-versed in conventional and problem based learning ($P < 0.0001$) and were also more prone to accept healthy criticism in their presentations ($P = 0.006$). There was no significant impact of age in adding variety, keeping updated, adopting changes, being well-versed, clarifying unclear concept and accepting healthy criticism in both the groups. The variable income did not produce any significant effect in altering IW of teachers. Duration of employment significantly increased the likelihood of adding variety in teaching ($P = 0.003$), adopt changes ($P = 0.05$) and accepting healthy criticism ($P = 0.05$) in both genders.

Discussion

Mental health can be improved by awareness and

Table-1: Association of gender with different dimensions of intellectual wellness.

Items to assess intellectual Wellness	Response	Female (175)	Male(86)
I add variety and interest in my teaching skills	No	1 (1.2%)	6 (3.4%)
	Sometimes	8 (9.3%)	8 (4.6%)
	Usually	30 (34.9%)	74 (42.3%)
	Always	47 (54.7%)	87 (49.7%)
I keep myself well informed in updates of researches	No	1 (1.2%)	6 (3.4%)**
	Sometimes	11 (12.8%)	30 (17.1%)
	Usually	38 (44.2%)	86 (49.1%)
	Always	36 (41.9%)	53 (30.3%)
I have the ability to adapt to changes and accept challenges	No	1 (1.2%)	4 (2.3%)
	Sometimes	7 (8.1%)	12 (6.9%)
	Usually	31 (36.0%)	70 (40.0%)
	Always	47 (54.7%)	89 (50.9%)
I am well versed n conventional and problem based learning	No	8 (9.3%)	8 (4.6%)
	Sometimes	12 (14.0%)	27 (15.4%)
	Usually	29 (33.7%)	68 (38.9%)
	Always	37 (43.0%)	72 (41.1%)
I am involved in research projects	No	10 (11.6%)	41 (23.4%)
	Sometimes	22 (25.6%)	28 (16.0%)
	Usually	25 (29.1%)	42 (24.0%)
	Always	29 (33.7%)	64 (36.6%)
I never hesitate to clarify unclear concepts even from my juniors	No	1 (1.2%)	4 (2.3%)**
	Sometimes	11 (12.8%)	12 (6.9%)
	Usually	38 (44.2%)	57 (32.6%)
	Always	36 (41.9%)	102 (58.3%)
I accept healthy criticism on my presentations	No	2 (2.3%)	6 (3.4%)
	Sometimes	13 (15.1%)	16 (9.1%)
	Usually	31 (36.0%)	65 (37.1%)
	Always	40 (46.5%)	88 (50.3%)
I think am given work more than i can perform	No	20 (23.3%)	32 (18.3%)
	Sometimes	18 (20.9%)	73 (41.7%)
	Usually	35 (40.7%)	41 (23.4%)
	Always	13 (15.1%)	29 (16.6%)

**P < 0.05, *P < 0.01

Results compared by Mann-Whitney U test.

implementation of all the steps required to acquire IW. It is documented that unfavourable working conditions are associated with poor quality of life and mental health among teachers.⁷ According to Hettler, "IW is stimulating the mind for the sake of stimulation" as it keeps an individual engaged in meaningful, informed conversations on an ongoing basis.⁸ The acquired intellectual capability can thus help in debate of views, thoughts, ideas and visions, which makes them productive for the society, and we observed a higher intellectual capability in male medical teachers.

Teachers are resource people for the students who not only guide and facilitate learning of students but also evaluate their performance. They are thus not only the tutors but also the role models, who can fulfill their responsibilities once and only if they have sound mind and body and are cognizant of moral issues, interpersonal communication and crisis management.⁹ It is thus very important that "they never hesitate to clarify unclear concepts even from juniors", which was practiced by male medical teachers.

Awareness and seeking more information is the first step towards acceptance of a change. The results of this study would be utilized in planning strategies for raising the awareness among faculty of medical universities. This study was the first in our setup. We used rule of the thumb, approached 300 participants but ended up with 261 filled questionnaires. Therefore, the limitation might hinder to generalize the findings to all medical institutes and all teaching faculty involved in basic science teaching. Nevertheless this is a component of the first study on the assessment of one of the concepts of wellness, conducted on Medical Faculty serving various private and public Medical Universities in Karachi, Pakistan.

Conclusion

IW of male medical teachers was better in terms of frequency of keeping informed about research updates and in-depth attempts to clarify unclear concepts.

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