

## Research Article

**Perception of Medical Students on the Utility of Students' Participation in Panel Discussion to Enhance Teaching and Learning.**

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**ABSTRACT**

The utility of students' participation in panel discussion is an innovative way of interactive teaching learning activity which can be combined with any form of teaching methods to improve the quality of the teaching learning experience. The traditional didactic lectures are no longer accepted by the students. So new innovations in teaching methodology are needed to meet the requirements of the students. Panellists are chosen from the students by the students to create an in depth knowledge on the subject. The students are given learning modules prior to the session as well as clarifications and briefings by expert faculty. This method of self directed learning will make the teaching and learning process more interactive, effective and student friendly.

**Keywords:** Medical education, constructivism, Students panel discussion, Innovation.

**INTRODUCTION**

A panel discussion, or simply a panel, involves a group of people gathered to discuss a topic in front of an audience, typically at scientific, business or academic conferences, fan conventions, and on television shows. Panel discussions are a useful way to trigger an exchange of viewpoints, either with prepared statements or in response to questions from the audience. Panels include a moderator who guides the discussion and elicits audience questions, with the goal of being informative and entertaining.

The goal of medical education today is to incorporate interactive session in lectures. Medical schools all over India mainly have lectures as the most widely used teaching and learning methods. As the classroom is getting larger due to students numbering more than 100, student's participation is still a challenge. Innovation to use interactive teaching methods in large classrooms are necessary to engage students in a useful way. The primary mode of delivery has been shifted to more student's centred approach to deliver the core knowledge with sound concepts of the subject.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional method of learning involves teaching the students using a lecture-based format. In contrast, a more modern view of learning is constructivism, where students are expected to be active in the learning process by participating in discussion and/or collaborative activities.<sup>2</sup> The Department of Community Medicine at Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) conducted a student panel discussion at the end of small group tutorials.

**METHODOLOGY**

The Medical Council of India recommends more of interactive and student centred teaching rather than the one way didactic methods. The Department of

Community Medicine at P.I.M.S has been trying to increase the student participation over the years. Interactive teaching methods like integrated teaching, group discussions, tutorials, Re orientation of medical education etc have been incorporated in the time table for the MBBS undergraduate students. The frequency of these tutorials is about once a month for 2 hours duration each. The students' were divided into smaller groups of 6 to 8 and each group was guided by a faculty. It was decided to have student panel discussion after student reading and tutorials sessions by individual faculty allotted to each small groups. The panellists were selected from students who were more interested in the topic from each group. The students were given reading materials and briefing on the topic was done by expert faculty members prior to the panel discussion. The students in the concerned group discussed with the faculty to give inputs to the panellist. The students' panel discussion was moderated by a senior faculty. The audience included the faculty members, post graduate students of the Department of Community Medicine as well as the medical students. Feedbacks regarding students' panel discussion were collected using an anonymous questionnaire. The data was collected by maintaining anonymity of students.

All opinions were rated using a five-point Likert scale. The participation to study was on voluntary basis. All participants were given a briefing about objective of the study and assured confidentiality in collection of personal data.

**RESULTS**

The total number of students of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> semester who attended the tutorials were 76. The students were divided into 10 smaller groups each group comprising of 7 – 8 students. The students' acceptability and feasibility of panel discussion was assessed using Likert scale.



The student's panel discussion was well accepted by the students. Most (92%) of the student's felt that this method of student involved teaching was interesting and graded it as moderate, high and very high. More than half of the participants responded to the query on student participation as high (42%) and very high (11.8%) respectively. Most of the participants (90%) regarded this method as a useful method of learning by grading it as moderate, high and very high.

Less than 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the students felt that they couldn't comprehend the topic by grading the method as very low and low. About 3/5<sup>th</sup> of the students felt that they had better attention span with this mode of teaching by

grading it as moderate and above. Majority of the students gave an overall rating of high (44%) and very high (11%). (Table 1)

Most of the students gave a feedback that the panel discussion was able to achieve the objectives explained prior to the session within the stipulated time by giving a score of 3, 4, and 5 (Good, Very Good, and Excellent). Majority of the students gave a scoring of more than 3 for appropriate use of audio visual aids during the session.

Sixty three percent of the students felt that there was adequate interaction with the students during the panel discussion by giving a scoring of more than 3. (Table 2)

**Table 1:** Ranking of perception about Student panel discussion (n = 76)

Characteristics	1. (Very Low)	2. (Low)	3. (Moderate)	4. (High)	5. (Very High)
Interesting	2 (3%)	4 (5%)	28 (37%)	30 (39%)	12 (16%)
Student Participation	-	9 (12%)	26 (34%)	32 (42%)	9 (11%)
Usefulness of Method	1 (1.3%)	7 (9.2%)	36 (47.5%)	25 (32.8%)	7 (9.2%)
Comprehension of Topic	2 (2.6%)	10 (13.3%)	33 (43.4%)	26 (34.2%)	5 (6.5%)
Attention Span	3 (4%)	11 (14%)	24 (32%)	27 (36%)	11 (14%)
Overall Rating	3 (4%)	5 (7%)	26 (34%)	33 (44%)	9 (11%)

**Table 2:** Ranking of various parameters of Student's panel discussion (n = 76)

Characteristics	1 (Poor)	2 (Fair)	3 (Good)	4 (Very Good)	5 (Excellent)
Achievements of Objective	-	8 (10.5%)	34 (44.7%)	26 (34.2%)	8 (10.5%)
Proper management of time	-	6 (7.8%)	25 (32.8%)	25 (32.8%)	20 (26.3%)
Appropriate use of Audio visual aids	17 (22.3%)	17 (22.3%)	24 (31.5%)	10 (13.1%)	9 (11.8%)
Interaction with students	1 (1.3%)	11 (14.4%)	17 (22.3%)	34 (44.7%)	12 (15.7%)

## DISCUSSION

The emerging trend all over the world is to have a integrated student-centered medical curriculum, demanding active participation from the students and facilitating self-directed learning. It is well known that no system could be fool proof in its application; it must be modified and applied to suit the needs of students in a particular infrastructure. Student panel discussion was a new concept in medical education. There was paucity of published studies on student's panel discussion. The student's panel discussion can be conducted after a tutorial or integrated teaching or microteaching or even after a didactic lecture class. By this method, the teacher will be able to understand the academic level of the students on the particular topic on which the session was conducted as well as the students will be able to find out the in depth subject matters. The students ask the panellist various queries which are moderated by the senior faculty who will be able to guide the students. This allows the students to contribute their views and raise questions.

The present study showed that most (92%) of the students graded this method of student panel discussion

which is an interactive session as moderately, high and very interesting. Majority of the students gave an overall rating of high (44%) and very high (11%). Traditional didactic lecture class are being practised in most of the medical colleges. A similar study done by AK Mishra among medical students showed that the new teaching technique of student panel discussion is a one step ahead of the normal classroom teaching.<sup>3</sup> A similar study done by Holambe among medical college students showed that medical students preferred interactive teaching sessions rather than the didactic lectures.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the participants (90%) regarded this method as a useful method of learning by grading it as moderate, high and very high. Less than 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the students felt that they couldn't comprehend the topic by grading the method as very low and low. About 3/5<sup>th</sup> of the students felt that they had better attention span with this mode of teaching by grading it as moderate and above. Several researchers have noted that Asian teachers of adults tend to emphasize teacher-centered classrooms, and exam results while, concepts such as flexibility, problem solving, critical thinking and independent learning are not recognized.<sup>5-7</sup> A study done by Sutherland, Kevin reported



that student-led discussions not only produce favorable student performance, but also foster greater participation, self-confidence and leadership ability.<sup>8</sup> Hunt reported positive learning outcomes from team learning as compared to traditional lecture methods.<sup>9</sup> Recent studies done by Stalin P and RC Chauhan shows the effectiveness of teaching methods favouring active learning methods.<sup>10,11</sup>

Time is a real constraint in this method of teaching & learning. The present study was able to stick to the time. The sessions needs to be time bound to conduct a student's panel discussion. The students are not experts in the subject and students as panellists is the main limitation of this method of teaching. Prior training of the students as well as the expert faculty who is the moderator will be able to overcome this limitation.

### CONCLUSION

The results of the present study along with previous evidence shows that students prefer interactive learning methods to traditional lecture classes. Student panel discussion is an interactive teaching - learning session which can be combined with any form of teaching methods (Traditional didactic lectures or newer method of interactive teaching sessions).

This new method is an impoverization in the teaching method to meet the expectations of the students and to improve the quality of teaching.

This method will make the teaching and learning process more interactive, effective and student friendly.

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