

How to Cite:

Joshi, R., Nigam, R., & Niranjana, R. (2022). Disinterest in academics of medical students after COVID-19: Reasons and solution. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S2), 1207–1217. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS2.5122>

Disinterest in Academics of Medical Students After COVID-19: Reasons and Solution

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Abstract---Background- National Medical Commission has made the mandate of 75% class attendance as eligibility criteria to appear in professional university examinations. Which has given the importance to class attendance, through which the student can improve his academic performance and score good marks in exams also. It is notice that students shown the disinterest in class lectures rejoining the college after COVID-19. Aims And Objectives-The purpose of the present study was to analyze the causes of disinterest in lectures which is resulting to low attendance and substandard performance. Material And Methods- This descriptive, cross sectional study of student's absenteeism was conducted on 580 students from phase 1 to phase III MBBS students of SARASWATI MEDICAL COLLEGE UNNAO, India. During the year 2021. After the consent from institutional Medical Education Unit. The response was collected through a structured, pretested questionnaire. Result was concluded on Likert scale and SPSS 22 software. Result- The results showed that major reasons for student disinterest were long class room study hours (mean 3.95), target based post graduate studies (mean 3.78), teaching ability of faculty (mean 3.72), social media (3.58), you-tube and online studies (mean 3.39), ill health (mean 2.57), over confidence (mean 2.81), other factors (mean 2.23). Teaching must be student centric there must be proper plan to encourage constructive student feedback. So that faculty should aware in changes in teaching style. Improving time management in classes allows students to enhance

their performance and achieve desired goals with less effort
 Conclusion- Due to different reasons students not attends the lectures. So it mandatory to increase the positive bonding between mentor and mentee. All Faculty must be trained commonly. Otherwise the student will face the problems later on in professional life.

Keywords---absenteeism, attendance, medical education, questionnaire.

Introduction

National Medical Commission has made the mandate of 75% class attendance as eligibility criteria to appear in professional university examinations due to pandemic it's done 70% (theory) for the batch 2020 (1). Which has given the importance to class attendance, as an eligibility criteria to appear in university examinations through this, the student can improve his academic performance and score good marks in exams also. Student absenteeism may negatively affect the general educational process and personal academic achievement of students and professional behavior (3). As per CBME Classroom lectures and small group discussions is necessary to develop self-confidence in cognitive domains (2). Revolution in information technology along with latest academic software's and designs has helped in delivering the content in a presentable, interesting, and interactive format (5).

The vast knowledge of subject, personal and professional teaching experience along with student teacher relationships helpful to increase the attendance of class. Instead of all the above good facts the low attendance is the major hurdle of the student's academic and behavioral performances. Student absenteeism can be defined as recurrent missing classes by students without suitable reasons related to education. It concerns the health profession education worldwide (8). What are the reasons of absenteeism of students from class lectures, practical, ward teachings and small group teaching. It is a major issues to find these reason for the betterment of the medical students (6). The reasons vary from area to area, but the majority of these reasons originate from problems within the institution itself. But social and personal factors that cause student absenteeism cannot be neglected (10). Purpose of the present study was to analyze the causes of disinterest in academics after reopening the college after COVID-19 in during session 2021-22 and to suggest various measures to prevent or reduce class absenteeism among medical students regarding this study.

Material and Methods

This descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted, Total 600 students were there but only 12 students did not participated in studies and 8 students filled the form in wrong manner. Students of MBBS phase 1 to phase III of SARASWATI MEDICAL COLLEGE UNNAO, India participated in study. The questionnaire were prevalidated by the institutional MEU, and undergone through many eyes. The purpose of the study was explained to the students and assured confidentiality in

the collection of personal data. Informed written consent is taken from students and ethical approval from the Institutional Ethical Committee.

Investigators have been trained before the questionnaire. Time duration was given 30 minutes for form submission, forms were filled by the students on the same day at the same time in different lecture halls and it was closed after 30 minutes of survey. The questionnaire is filled in Google survey form and all the instructions were given to students before filling the form, the faculty members were present there to help the students for any queries. The response was collected through a structured, pretested questionnaire. The collected data were entered into MS Excel 2016. Results were concluded on Likert scale and SPSS 22 software. Standard deviation using the Students' t-test and one-way ANOVA. The confidence interval and P value were set at 95% and ≤ 0.05 .

Observation and Result

Response rate was 96%. As shown in Table 1, of those students who responded 51.2% were male; 98% were hostellers. Data showed equal participation from both genders to generalize the results better. In terms of age, almost 44.2% of the respondents were from the age group of >25, and the phase 1 students participated the most. Most population is of eastern Indians so they bunk the classes and go on holidays frequently. Belonging to a business class family many students opted the medical field as per their parents' but they are now happy by this decision of opting medical. 48.3% of students spend more than 10 hours a day with gadgets in social media resulting they don't spend their time to be physically fit, 26.9% of students play games and few do yoga. After COVID-19 many students are under taking some treatments (75.8%) and 79.1% having history of drug abuse mainly alcohol consumption. Above all the characteristics can be easily seen in chart 1.

Main reason not attending the academic sessions of female and male is depicted in Table 2 and 3. The foremost common reasons and its mean of not attending the classes of female (f) and male (m) are they can easily find lectures online in the form of videos/slides/PPTS (f- 4.15, m- 4.22). Female students are overconfident (3.78) to clear the exams more than male students (3.22). Girls (3.09) can easily concentrate during lectures, as it takes too long to finish than boys (3.79). Boys (4.18) prefer to spend the same time in self-studies/self-directed studies while girls (2.36) not. Male (3.31) are in more favor of penalty for absenteeism as per female (3.75). Both skip lectures as you spend that time for socialization like in the cafeteria or social media etc. (f- 3.52, m- 3.7). Views of boys (3.79) students is that lectures are too long to concentrate. Boys (3.6) also complained the some faculty have poor teaching skills. Standard deviation, variance, coefficient of variance and standard error of mean is also calculated. Mean difference can be easily depicted in the chart 2, bars of both is at maximum and same height for question 10 while bars of question 8 of least mean. In table 4 and P-value suggests no difference between the male and female groups. Large difference in thinking is present between male and female students regarding few questions for not attending the classes

Solutions

Factors related to faculty

Lectures involving teaching more students in a single large classroom create monotony and loss of interaction. Lecture with suitable activities eg. SGT, Role play with the peer assistance, quiz, and interactive session through simulators at skill labs can be done in innovative format by using technology and creative teaching. Teaching must be student-centric there must be proper plan to encourage constructive student feedback. So that faculty should aware in changes in teaching style.

Teaching strategy and system should be controlled by academic cell term wise as in large class the professional, psychomotor, cognitive domain could not be enhanced perfectly. Guidance must be given by the experience teacher. Clinical exposure must be given by medical teachers only by videos in absence of original patient. Mentors should provide the guidance to search articles to develop the interest in latest researches.

Student related factors

Incorporation of digital attendance can be a possible solution. Fine must be included in institutional policy. Incorporating mentoring programs into the curriculum regarding the effects of absenteeism on academic performances may prevent students from skipping classes. Time management plays a vital role in improving student's academic performance and achievements. Improving time management in classes allows students to enhance their performance and achieve desired goals with less effort. Inclusion of sports, yoga and other extracurricular activities will create the bonding between batch mates from different regions, mentors and provide the health benefits also which is responsible for sound mind and increased concentration.

Discussion

The problem of student absenteeism is the concern of every member of society because the impact of absenteeism occurs not only on the individual but also on the whole society. As per NMC mandatory criteria to appear in professional exams is to complete the 75% attendance. Our study correlated with Rashid S (2), Availability of online resources (mean 2.84), lectures, not enough informative (mean 2.49). There is an inverse correlation between absenteeism and academic performance. In our policy we warn the student has 10% absenteeism, second warning at 25 % and information to guardians along with counseling given by his academic advisor before reaching 35% absenteeism, < 45% is not allowed to appear in second terminal examinations. Positive correlation was found between attendance and final exam performance in all courses together, but the relationship between the variables was not statistically significant (12). Early detection and prevention might prevent unwanted consequences of absenteeism on medical students' academic performance (8). It was found that poor teacher's skills may predispose to student absenteeism, as was observed by Wadesango and Machingamb[3] Desalegn et al. [4] reported, Students who remain absent

consistently have very poor coordination with teachers and peers, thus resulting in poor academic performance of these students. Reasons mentioned by the students were lack of interest (36%), topic related (19%), mood disturbance (19%) and significant statistical relation was found between frequency of absenteeism and reasons mentioned by the students (5). The study demonstrated a positive correlation between lecture attendance and final exam performance. Although the results were not statistically positive, they agree with local and international studies (Kirby and McElroy, 2003) (9). The study is limited by the small sample size and does not include student academic level and other factors that might influence student performance in exams such as their gender and cumulative grade point average (Alghamdi et al., 2016) (10). Students are confident and they will get the notes from YouTube and other sources (6). Male and female students have almost same views for not attending the class (7) same as we did not find the statistical significance relations for all the questions. Another important limiting factor in this study is that students are allowed to withdraw from the course and final exam if their performance in the midterm exams is poor and this will bias the sample that we are taking to reflect the relationship between class attendance and performance among students. Suggested measures included improved teacher-student relationship, interactive teaching and conducive classrooms etc. (13).

Conclusion

Many reasons are responsible for absenteeism among medical students, which leads to a negative impact on their academic performance. The main reasons for student absenteeism are diversion of students to social media, unplanned long lectures, lack of professionalism & faculty members, lack of proper teaching skills, no health exercises, lack of institutional facilities for teaching like no proper internet connectivity, lack of audio-visual aids, lack of simulators with skill labs, less clinical exposure of student, less hour of bed teaching, not good response from teachers. Creating awareness among medical students about the effect of absenteeism on their academic performances may prevent them from skipping classes. During the course time, recorded and monitored attendance and performance must be shown to each student through notice board so that they can perform better. Constructive feedback from students with balance between institutional administration and students' academic, social and personal life. This will help to mitigate student suffering, raise academic standards and improve medical professionalism.

Acknowledgment

I am thankful to my co-authors and coordinator MEU and all the faculty members who helped me to conduct this survey and the students who all participated in this study.

Funding statement

Funding has been done by author itself

Conflict of interest

There is no any conflict of interest.

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Tables and Charts

Table 1
Baseline characteristics of students

Gender (G)	Male - 51.2%		Female - 48.8%	
Accommodation (A)	Hosteller - 98%		Own - 2%	
Age	< 21 years - 18.3%	22-25 years - 37.5%	>25 years -44.2%	
phase of study	Phase1- 29.3%	Phase 2- 27.3%	Phase 3 (i) - 24.8%	Phase 3 (ii)- 18.6%
Region (R)	East Indians - 64.5%	North Indians - 23.7%	South Indians- 11.8%	

Parent occupation (PO)	Service - 32.2%	Business-67.8%			
Opted Medical field as choice (MFC)	Yes - 41.9%	No - 58.1%			
Likes medical field (LMF)	Yes - 58.7%	No - 41.3%			
Physically fitness(PF)	Yoga - 23.9%	Exercise - 11.6%	Game - 26.2%	Walk - 12.5%	No- 25.8%
Use of social media (USM)	<5 hours- 23.9%	5-10 hours-27.8%	>10 hours - 48.3%		
under some treatments (T/T)	Yes -75.8%	No - 24.2%			
Drug Abuse (DA)	Yes -79.1%	No - 21.9%			
Elaboration and reason of the answer with every question (rows are provided but not mandatory to fill it's up to choice of student)					

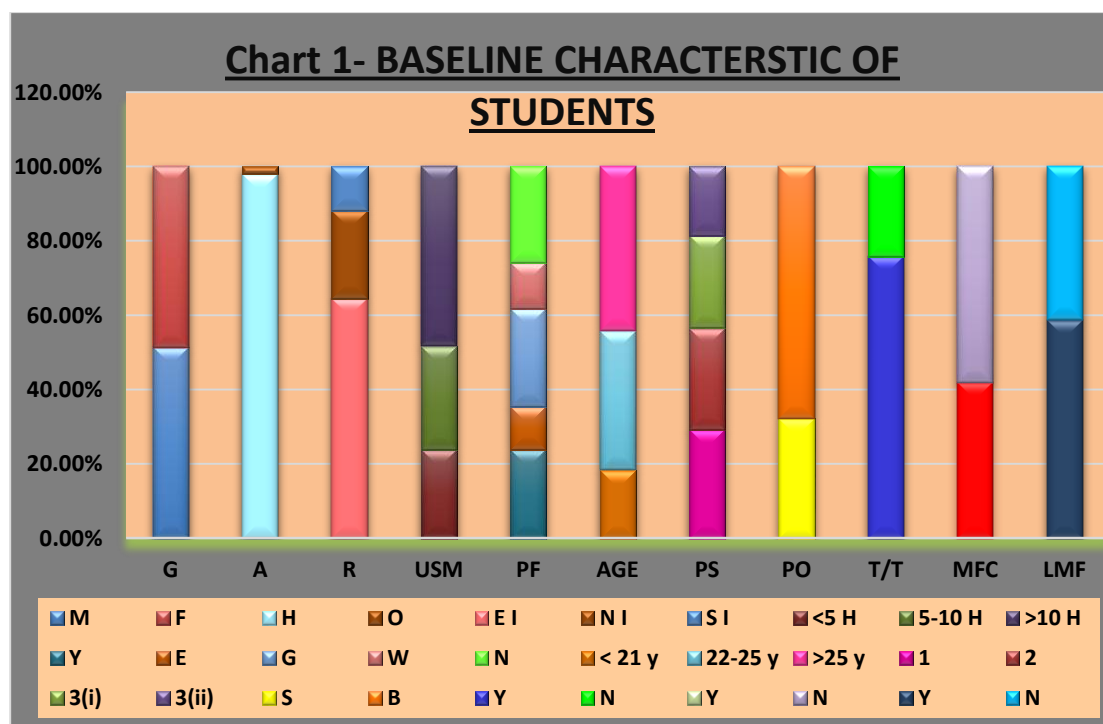


Table 2

Statistical analysis of Likert based questions, regarding the attitude of the study participants toward the reasons for absenteeism in female

students
Questionnaire is designed in the formats of GOOGLE FORM, You skip lectures

Table 3
Statistical analysis of Likert based questions, regarding the attitude of the study participants toward the reasons for absenteeism in male students

Questionnaire is designed in the formats of GOOGLE FORM, You skip lectures because						
SN.	questions	MEAN	SD	V	CV	SEM
1	you are not interested in that subject	3.07	2.82	0.34	0.92	0.16
2	you cannot concentrate during lectures, as it takes too long to finish	3.79	3.47	0.35	0.92	0.2
3	overcrowding of students	3.43	3.22	0.37	0.94	0.18
4	the teacher is having poor teaching skill	3.6	3.31	0.39	0.92	0.19
5	there is an unfavorable learning environment like an excessive distraction, noise, no proper sitting classrooms, overcrowding, poor ventilation, etc	2.42	2.37	0.42	0.98	0.14
6	you do not like the teaching style of the teacher	2.8	2.62	0.37	0.93	0.15
7	skip lectures as you spend that time for socialization like in the cafeteria or social media etc	3.7	3.44	0.36	0.93	0.2
8	you are involved at the same time in some other part-time job that you have opted for helping your financing	1.94	1.79	0.38	0.92	0.1
9	You are overconfident to clear the exams	3.27	2.93	0.27	0.9	0.17
10	you easily find lectures online in the form of videos/slides/PPTS	4.22	3.81	0.27	0.9	0.22
11	Lectures are not enough informative	3.4	3.12	0.23	0.92	0.18
12	you want to spend the same time in self-studies/self-directed studies	4.18	3.75	0.32	0.9	0.21
13	some family issue	3.49	3.16	0.29	0.91	0.21
14	you were awake late at night	4	3.67	0.33	0.92	0.16
15	Your health issues. Depression anxiety or other health problems	2.96	2.82	0.37	0.95	0.21
16	Surroundings environment as the college in rural areas.	4.07	3.67	0.4	0.9	0.16
17	Peer pressure to not attend the classes	3.02	2.8	0.38	0.93	0.16
18	Preparing pg entrance	3.16	2.88	0.39	0.91	0.16
19	Busy in Extracurricular activities and sociocultural programs	3.02	2.84	0.39	0.94	0.16
20	No penalty for absteenism	3.75	3.45	0.39	0.92	0.2

21	wants undue advantage of COVID and expecting mercy in professional from faculty	3.88	3.63	0.36	0.94	0.21
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Elaboration and reason of the answer with every question (rows are provided but not mandatory to fill its up to choice of student)

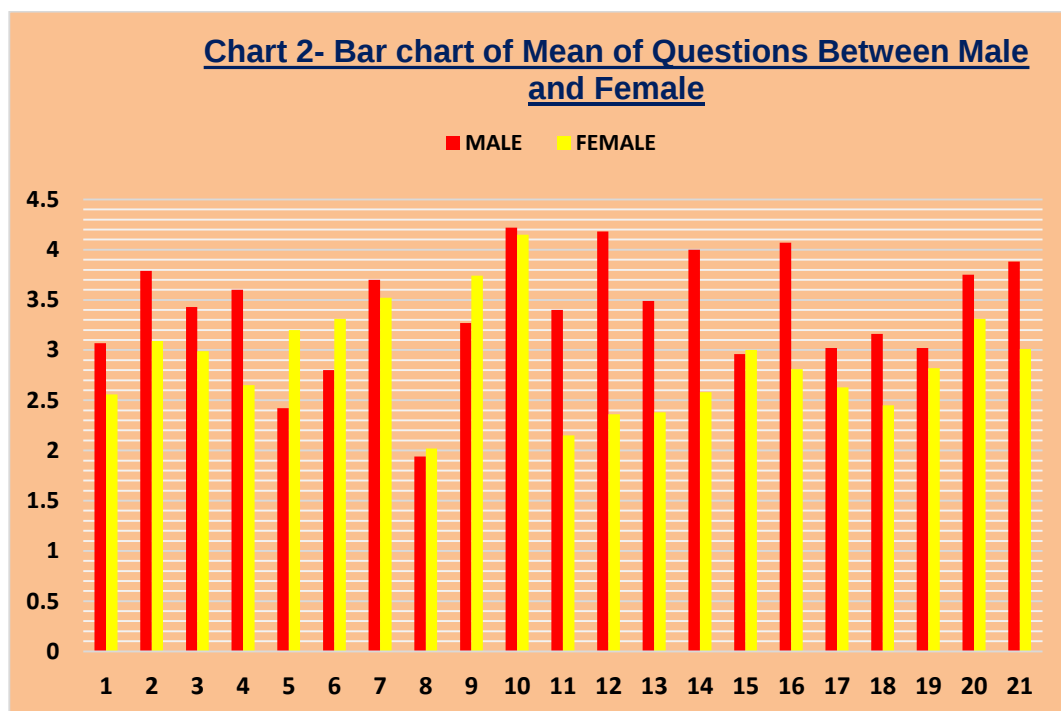


Table 4
Statistical analysis toward the reasons for absenteeism between male and female

SN.	Questions	P value	T value
1	you are not interested in that subject	0.82	2.36
2	you cannot concentrate during lectures, as it takes too long to finish	0.57	2.45
3	overcrowding of students	0.95	2.44
4	the teacher is having poor teaching skill	0.76	2.78
5	there is an unfavorable learning environment like an excessive distraction, noise, no proper sitting classrooms, overcrowding, poor ventilation, etc	0.94	2.45
6	you do not like the teaching style of the teacher	0.82	2.45
7	skip lectures as you spend that time for socialization like in the cafeteria or social media etc	0.84	2.45
8	you are involved at the same time in some other part-time job that you have opted for helping your financing	0.72	2.78
9	You are overconfident to clear the exams	0.92	2.57
10	you easily find lectures online in the form of videos/slides/PPTS	0.92	2.57
11	Lectures are not enough informative	0.41	2.45
12	you want to spend the same time in self-studies/self-directed studies	0.61	2.45

13	some family issue	0.84	2.45
14	you were awake late at night	0.57	2.45
15	Your health issues. Depression anxiety or other health problems	0.9	2.78
16	Surroundings environment as the college in rural areas.	0.66	2.78
17	Peer pressure to not attend the classes	0.79	2.78
18	Preparing pg entrance	0.73	2.45
19	Busy in Extracurricular activities and sociocultural programs	0.95	2.45
20	No penalty for abstinence	0.89	2.57
21	wants undue advantage of COVID and expecting mercy in professional from faculty	0.45	2.78

**CHART 3-PIE CHART OF P VALUE BETWEEN
MALE AND FEMALE**

