

Recommending and Mending

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Abstract:

Aim: To determine the preferences of students studying at Riphah Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Islamabad for ideal characteristics of teacher, discipline maintenance, level of discipline appropriate for students of university and if student teacher interaction on social sites is beneficial.

Materials and methods: A total of 102 students from Semester 1, 3 and 5 filled the survey based questionnaire. The Kendall's tau test was used to determine the significant relations and frequency of the responses calculated. For sample analysis, Spss 17 and Microsoft Excel were used.

Results: 47% population consisted of males and 55% comprised female population. Most chose responses were the teacher with cooperative attitude, followed by preference for strict teacher (10%) and the least liked attitude for teacher was an easy going (5%). Knowing how to maintain effective discipline was most chosen option (87%), followed by using methods of examples to demonstrate correction in wrong behavior (42%) while smaller number of respondents preferred public insulting of student in class by teacher (14%). In regards to the need for discipline at university level; majority preferred a medium level of discipline (65%), strong need for discipline was preferred at second number (13%) while equal number chose for low or no need to have discipline at university (12%). Finally communication between students and teachers was thought to be positive by students at Riphah University (81%) in contrast to those who considered this as breach of respect and privacy barrier between students and teachers (21%).

Conclusion: The results of this study indicate the need for a cooperative and helping teacher with whom the students can communicate easily and take guidance. Individual counseling of the student has been shown to be a more effective method to address problems created by the student and those related to them. A medium level of university discipline is largely preferred which should be flexible but neither too lenient nor too strict. Interacting with teachers through social network sites can help students communicate more properly with teachers.

Word Count: 1,919

Introduction:

The history of teaching is hard to determine. In a way from Islamic perspective, teaching has been one of the acts directly demonstrated by Allah to man when Adam (God be pleased with him) was given knowledge and this knowledge became the reason for man to be superior to angels (2:31). A review of history tells that wisest people, prophets, philosophers have been teaching their communities. Therefore the teachers held the responsibility of shaping and improving the society. For this reason, they had a great respect and status in society.

However over a period of time the interaction between students and teachers has changed significantly. In prior times, the word and say of teacher was given importance, they enjoyed immense respect but over a period of time, the respect for teachers has declined and reduced¹. A recent survey in the UK indicated that over 90% of the teachers reported that they feel insulted and disrespectful². Many factors could be responsible for this shift. Possibly teachers lost the respect and dignity when teaching was taken as a profession. A survey reports find that increasing the salary package of teachers was not linked with long term job satisfaction³. People who teach for reasons other than financial and economical, who have a cause, care and a feeling to contribute succeed better compared to those who do not have any real motivation to deliver and teach⁴. Such teachers would earn less respect from the pupil, their parents and eventually society⁵. Another reason could be the bad behavior of teachers with students which could not be permitted under any law. The cases such as physical and sexual abuse, harassing of children and exploiting them have caused extreme insult to such a noble profession^{6,7}. Similarly media has brought disgrace to the profession and the relation between the students and teachers. Movies, T.V. plays and comedies have been made which has disrupted the barrier of respect in the student-teacher interaction⁸. Furthermore the materialistic trend of society has also brought an imbalance that people who are not financially strong are looked down. Teachers in Pakistan as well as in many other countries are underpaid^{9,10}.

The trend in teaching style and methodology has also experienced tremendous shifts¹¹. Keeping all the above mentioned reasons in view, a questionnaire was designed to assess the trends, methods and qualities that students think a good teacher should have which can be beneficial in improving learning process as well as the interaction between students and teachers.

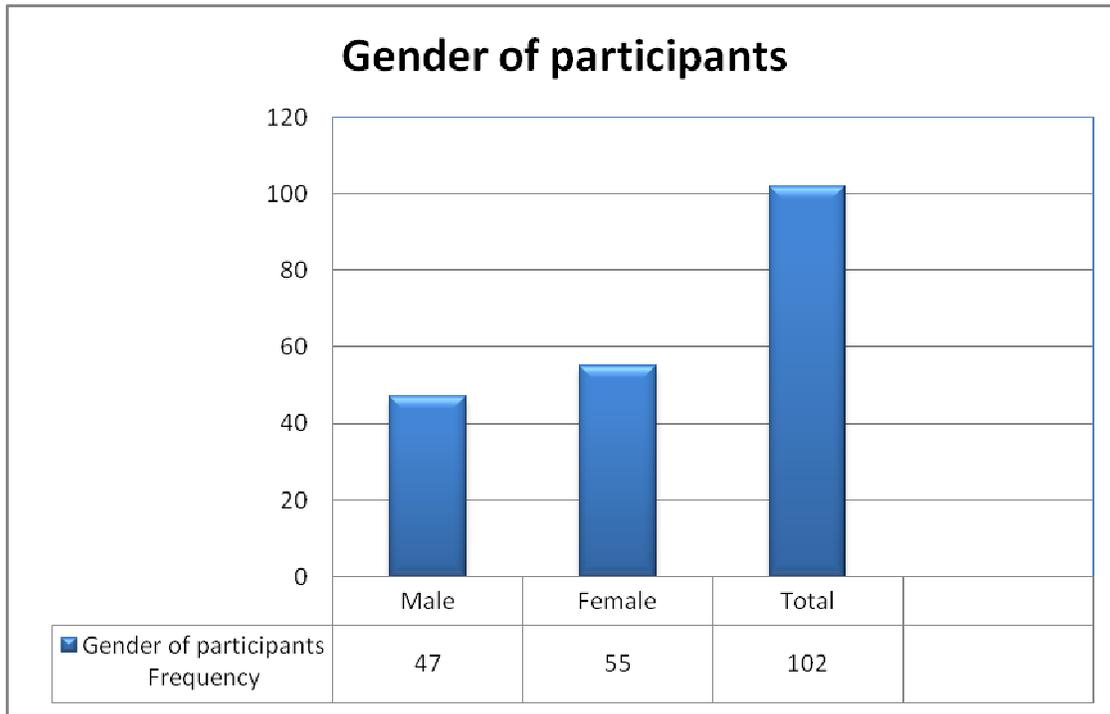
Materials and Methods:

A survey form containing closed ended questions related to the general attitude of teachers towards students, choosing a way to address discipline violation by students, the need to have discipline maintenance at University level and whether students and teachers should interact on social networking sites such as Facebook, Orkut, Twitter , were included (See Appendix 1). The questionnaires were distributed to the students of doctor of Pharmacy in 1st, 3rd and 5th Semester at Riphah Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Islamabad, Pakistan in the month of May, 2012.

A total of 102 students completed the survey form. For data analysis, SPSS 17 and Microsoft Excel were used. The frequencies of the responses were calculated and Kendall's tau test was used to determine the level of significance. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

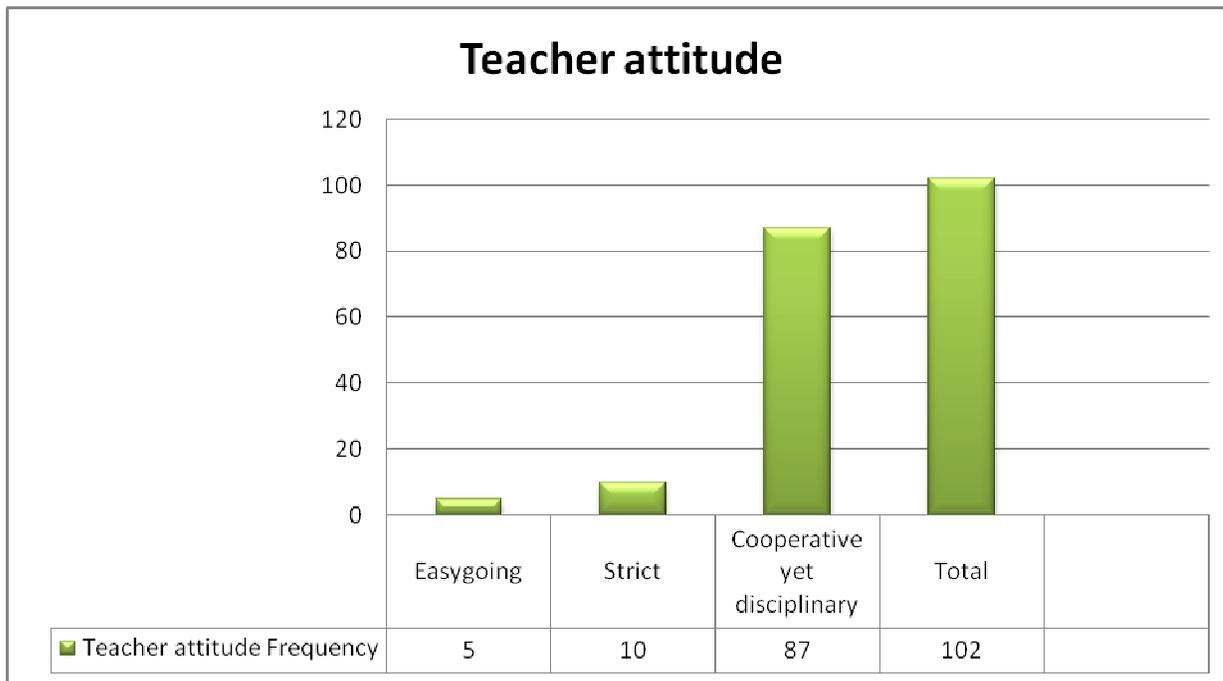
Results:

From a total of 102 students, 47 were males and 55 were females (Graph 1)



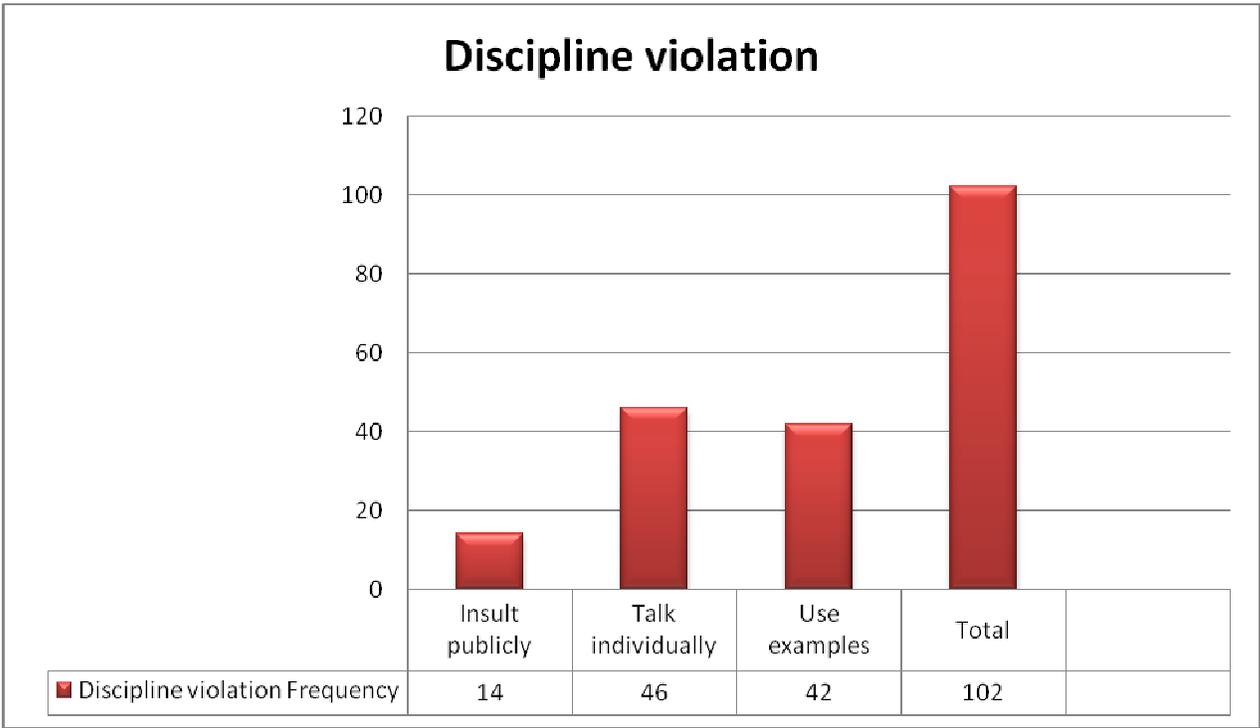
Graph 1. Gender of participants completing the survey.

The results obtained for the ideal teacher attitude towards students are represented in Graph 2.



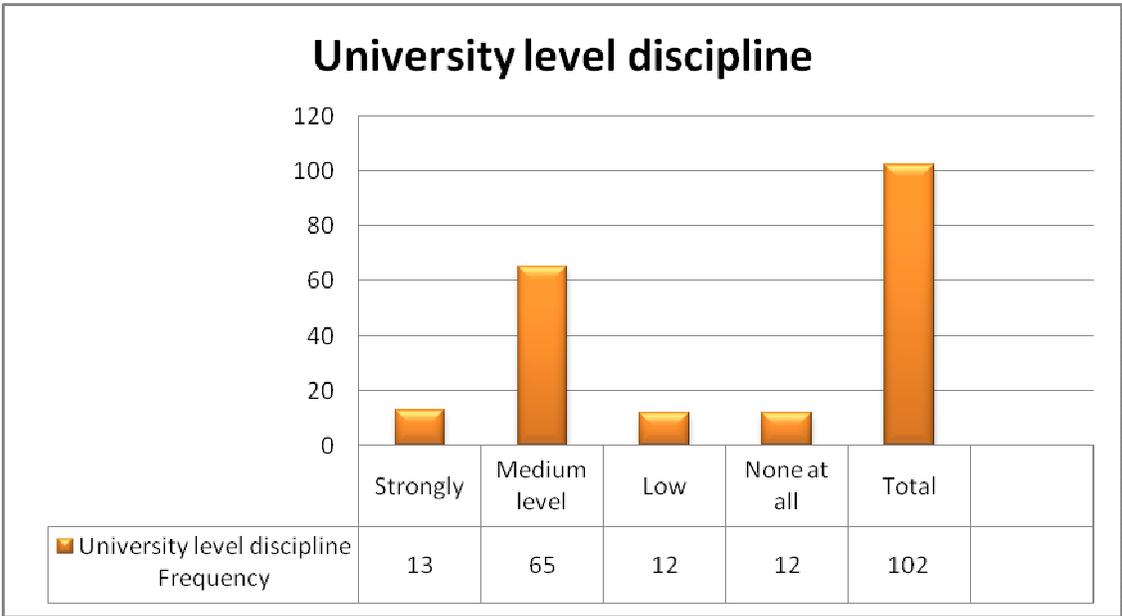
Graph 2. Ideal attitude of teacher as recorded by participants.

Regarding the way to handle discipline violation by students in class, the frequencies are shown in Graph 3.



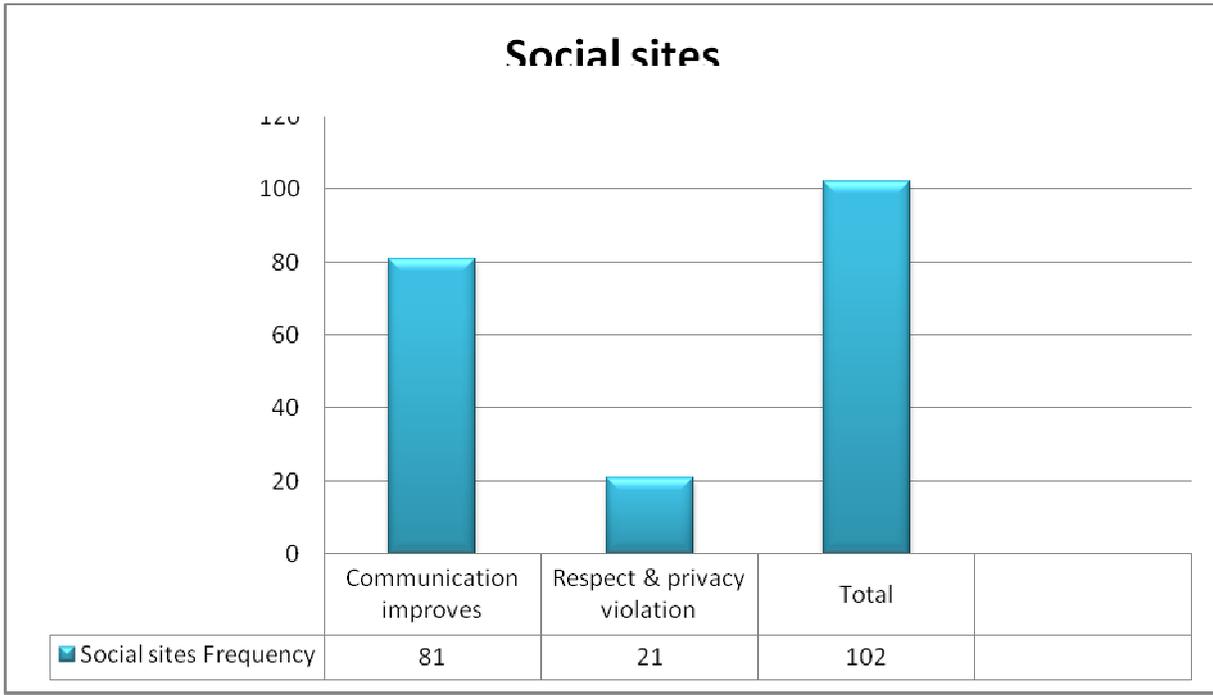
Graph 3. Best method for teachers to tackle discipline violation by students in class room.

In response to the need to have discipline at university level, participant’s choice is illustrated in Graph 4.



Graph 4. The need to have discipline maintenance at university level.

Finally the question to have students and teachers interact on social sites, the participant’s opinions are elaborated in Graph 5.



Graph 5. Student-teacher interaction on social networking sites.

			Gender of participants	Teacher attitude	Discipline violation	University level discipline	Social sites
Kendall's tau_b	Gender of participants	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.166	.085	-.049	.179
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.091	.370	.600	.072
		N	102	102	102	102	102
Teacher attitude	Teacher attitude	Correlation Coefficient	.166	1.000	.286**	-.052	-.068
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	.	.002	.575	.488
		N	102	102	102	102	102
Discipline violation	Discipline violation	Correlation Coefficient	.085	.286**	1.000	-.126	-.016
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.370	.002	.	.160	.871
		N	102	102	102	102	102
University level discipline	University level discipline	Correlation Coefficient	-.049	-.052	-.126	1.000	.007
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.600	.575	.160	.	.942
		N	102	102	102	102	102
Social sites	Social sites	Correlation Coefficient	.179	-.068	-.016	.007	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.072	.488	.871	.942	.
		N	102	102	102	102	102

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1. Results obtained from Kendall's tau b test.

Discussion:

The results of the study indicate that students at Riphah University prefer a cooperative teacher who can still maintain discipline without being too easy going that students start to take the teacher for granted and do not pay attention. The transition from college to university level can be difficult for students to cope¹². Students face difficulties in understanding new subjects, figuring out new ways of learning and discarding the older methods that might have been useful in school and college life and withstanding the pressures of competition and workload at university level. In such a situation, an easy going or a very strict teacher might not be able to deliver the right guidance that students need. The communication between students and teachers is very essential and pivotal. With an overly strict teacher, students would be more hesitant and reluctant to ask questions and clarify their problems and difficulties. An effective communication between students and teachers can in turn lead to improvement in learning by the students¹³. Research has also indicated that learning occurs best when the mind is in a relaxed but alert state¹⁴. There were no statistical significant differences between male and female students ($p=.091$).

In regards to most appropriate behavior for a teacher to adopt whenever any student violates discipline; students at Riphah University chose individual counseling to be the most suitable method (46%). This has certainly the advantage of preventing the student from feeling embarrassed in front of other pupils. Although a very close response was using method of criticizing the wrong behavior through giving examples without naming the student (42%). The results obtained in the study for discipline violation were statistically significant ($p=.002$). Insulting and damaging someone's ego, self esteem and image can have detrimental effect¹⁵. The results of majority give us the clue that in case if a student misbehaves, it is best to call the student individually, ask the reasons for his/her misbehavior and try guiding him/her not to repeat the same in future. It might be possible that the student is misbehaving because he/she is not able to concentrate, feels boredom in class which can be largely overcome by using effective teaching strategies, fails to understand the subject or may be experiencing some other difficulties¹⁶. Teachers who use aggressive strategies face more disciplinary problems while those who favor using reward strategies for encouraging good behavior encounter fewer issues of discipline violation by students^{17,18}. Therefore it is best to talk to the student. Using examples to illustrate good discipline might be good but it may not reveal the reason why student is misbehaving. Very few students (14%) thought that if a teacher insults the students in class, it is best form of amending the wrong behavior as the message is delivered to the whole class. Like mentioned earlier, this may not give the insight of the reason why student is misbehaving.

The third question evaluated the need to have discipline at university level. Majority of the respondents selected the medium level of discipline at university level (85%). Equal number of responses were recorded from participants on maintaining a low or no level of discipline at university level (12%). 13% believed that there should be strict discipline enforcement at university level. The need to have disciplined environment cannot be overlooked as students after passing out from university will have to join market field, research and teaching areas or complete post graduation studies. It is hence clear that failing to abide with rules and regulations will create professionals who may be involved in non-peaceful activities as well as harming the rights of co-students and other individuals. However, the results were not significant ($p=.575$)

Finally in the last question, it was inquired that should teachers and students interact on social networking sites such as Facebook, Orkut and Twitter or not. Students spend considerably equal time spent in college or even greater on Facebook¹⁹. Many students send friend requests to teachers. In some countries, there is restriction and prohibition on interaction between students and teachers without the monitoring by a third party²⁰. In Pakistan, there is no such restriction. Non statistical correlation was noted ($p=.072$).81% respondents view interacting with the teachers on social networking sites as a positive communication improving tool. Few respondents (21%) considered it inappropriate to interact with the teachers as they viewed it as an act that could breach the respect and privacy of the teachers as teachers may have shared pictures of their family which might be of no positive significance to the students. However privacy settings can help prevent this. If the students are spending so much significant amount of time on these sites, can the teachers use this tool to educate the students better? Creating

educational groups on such sites, discussing different points, sharing educational videos can be certainly considered beneficial²¹. However both for the professionals as well as students, social network sites pose serious threats^{22,23}. Recent research has also indicated increased levels of depression in people spending more time on social networking sites^{24,25,26}. Considering the ongoing research, we need to carefully decide that should teachers and students be encouraged to interact on these sites?

The present study had its limitations such as short sample size and shorter duration of the study. In future, the study can be expanded to incorporate responses from different universities of the country as well as including the responses from school and college candidates and then comparing the results.

Conclusion:

With the changing trends and shifts in society, the education system has experienced tremendous changes over a period of time as well. Hence it is important that as teachers we understand and update our methodologies to deliver effectively to the students. As teachers, we need to keep positive attitude towards students to ensure that they are able to communicate their problems and difficulties to us while on the same time; we need to make the students comply with the disciplinary rules and regulations as well. Having an insight of the needs of the students and how they think they will be able to learn better can certainly help teachers design and shape the curriculum and the methodologies required.

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Appendix 1

Please fill the most appropriate option listed in the questions. This survey would only take your 5 minutes. Thanking you for your participation.

Gender Male

Female

1. At most times, a teacher should be:

- a. Easygoing
- b. Strict
- c. Cooperative but should know how to maintain discipline.

2. In case of violation of class discipline by any student, the most appropriate action teacher should take:

- a. Insult the student in front of class so no one else tries to repeat the same mistake
- b. Talk individually to student to prevent student from feeling embarrassed in class.
- c. Speak in an indirect way giving examples to convey the message to class not to abide by rules.

3. How essential is maintenance of discipline at university level?

- a. Strongly
- b. Medium level.
- c. Low
- d. None at all

4. Regarding Students-Teacher interaction at social network sites (Facebook, Orkut, Twitter etc):

- a. It is good as it promotes communication between students and teachers.
- b. It violates the privacy and the respect barrier between teachers and students.

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