



Views of Students and Faculty Members on Faculty Evaluation by Students: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Background: Evaluation of faculty members of universities is done in different ways, and one of these challenging methods is the evaluation by students. This study aimed to compare the viewpoint of Iranian students and faculty members on faculty evaluation by students.

Materials and Methods: In this systematic review, a systemic search of online databases (Medline, EMBASE, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PsycINFO, CIVILICA, and Google Scholar search engine) was conducted for relevant studies up to November 2022. Two reviewers evaluated the quality of eligible studies. The quality of the information was evaluated using the STROBE tool.

Results: A total of ten related studies were selected. The results showed that 82.9% of the faculty members had a negative view of their evaluation by students, most of whom were women ($p < 0.05$). The most frequent reasons included lack of attention to the content differences of the courses (90.6%), lack of accuracy (89.1%), lack of honesty (85.6%), and lack of showing educational skills (79%). However, 65.8% of students had a positive view of faculty evaluation. The results showed that the mean evaluation scores of the faculty members with a positive attitude to the importance and applicability of the students' evaluation results were higher than the faculty members who were against it ($p < 0.05$). There was a significant correlation between the mean evaluation scores of faculties and their attitude towards the importance of student evaluation results ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Faculty members were dissatisfied with the students' evaluation, but students had a positive view. Therefore, different methods of evaluation should be used at the same time for faculty evaluation and decision-making.

Key Words: Evaluation, Iran, Faculty members, Students.

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1- INTRODUCTION

Professors are the main pillars of universities, and their performance plays an essential role in the efficiency of the entire educational system. On the other hand, the sensitivity of education and attention to educational processes in universities emphasizes the necessity of evaluating professors, which will improve the quality of education and ultimately improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the country's educational system (1-5).

Evaluation is the feedback of the stages of a process, based on which the degree of achievement or non-achievement of goals can be explored. Today, there are various models for evaluating the effectiveness of the education provided by professors, which include examples of evaluation by officials and colleagues, students, and self-evaluation (5, 6). The most common method in most universities in the world is the evaluation by students, which is currently used as the main source for evaluating the teaching performance of faculty members in many countries. It is the most controversial method of teacher evaluation, with strong supporters and opponents alike (7-9).

Various studies have shown that most universities and colleges use the student evaluation of professors as a way of evaluating the effectiveness of education (10-13). According to some researchers, using students' opinions to evaluate professors is the only tangible resource for evaluation in schools and universities worldwide and can be useful in improving teaching methods and effectiveness and, ultimately, enhancing the quality of education (14). Opinions vary in this regard, with some researchers believing that the evaluation by students is valid and one of the best tools and others considering such evaluations invalid (15). A review study, defending the validity of student evaluations, stated that students' evaluation of education is a valid indicator

of the effectiveness of education because students can correctly distinguish between professors based on their level of learning (16). However, some university professors and academic staff are suspicious of the results of student evaluations and believe that they hinder their freedom of action in education. This has led to a decrease in the motivation and seriousness of professors and a decline in the academic performance of students, ultimately decreasing the quality of education at the university level (17, 18). Some professors also believe that personality traits and general environmental characteristics affect people's understanding and judgments, and there is no reason why students would be immune from such bias in evaluating their professors (19).

Similar to other universities worldwide, Iranian universities use this type of evaluation, and a large number of students evaluate their professors through opinion questionnaires every year (20). A general review of research findings shows a significant difference between the opinions of students and professors regarding evaluation criteria (21-26). Knowing the opinions of students and faculty members, as the two main factors in the evaluation of professors, can provide a useful guide for correcting existing problems. Also, knowing the weaknesses and strengths in evaluation helps educational planners improve the evaluation forms and determine the true results of professors' performance (21). The present study aimed to compare the viewpoints of Iranian students and faculty members about faculty evaluation by students.

2- MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) checklist was used as a template for this review (27).

2-1. Eligibility criteria

The participants, interventions, comparators, and outcomes (PICO) scale was used to formulate the review objective and inclusion criteria.

Participants: Iranian university students and faculty members.

Interventions and Comparators: The included studies were non-interventional, so a comparison group did not exist.

Outcomes: Faculty evaluation by students.

2-2. Included studies: Research articles conducted in Iran were the main criteria for inclusion in the study. Other inclusion criteria were the focus on the attitude/opinions of university students and faculty members towards faculty evaluation by students, published up to November 2022, written in English or Persian, and published articles with full text available.

2-3. Exclusion criteria

The exclusion criteria were abstracts without the full article, articles not written in English or Persian, reviews or meta-analyses, pilot studies, letters, commentaries, editorials, short reports, case reports, preliminary studies, and briefs.

2-4. Information sources

A systemic search of electronic databases Medline (via PubMed), Scopus, Web of Science, EMBASE, ERIC, PsycINFO, CIVILICA, and Google Scholar search engine was conducted with no time limit up to November 2022. The search was performed independently and in duplication by two reviewers, and any disagreement was resolved by the supervisor. The search included the following terms in singular and Boolean searches using AND/OR for several combinations in “abstracts”: students, university students, academic students, student evaluation, evaluation, teacher performance, faculty evaluation, teacher

evaluation, faculty member, professor, educators, faculty rating, and evaluation. The search was performed independently and in duplication by two reviewers, and any disagreement was resolved by the supervisor.

2-5. Study selection

A database search was done for possible studies, abstracts were screened for eligible studies, full-text articles were obtained and assessed, and a final list of included studies was made. In addition to primary articles, their references were also searched for additional studies. This process was done independently and in duplication by two reviewers, and any disagreement was resolved by the third reviewer. References were organized and managed using EndNote software (version X8).

2-6. Data collection process

A researcher-made template was developed and followed for each study. Two reviewers collected the data independently, and a third reviewer solved any discrepancies. Data collected from the selected studies included study design, study population (authors' names, setting, and sample size), year of publication, and the main results.

2-7. Risk of bias

The risk of bias was assessed following the standard tool of modified STROBE (STrengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) positioning guidelines (28). It is a valuable tool for evaluating the quality of observational studies. This checklist has 11 items, and a maximum of one point is allocated for each methodological element. The final score of the checklist was 0-11, indicating high quality (8-11), medium quality (4-7), and low quality (0-3). The assessment was done by two reviewers independently and in duplication, and any

discrepancies were resolved by the third reviewer.

2-8. Synthesis of results

Due to differences in the included studies, settings, small sample sizes, different field of study, and the type of questionnaire used, a meta-analysis was not conducted.

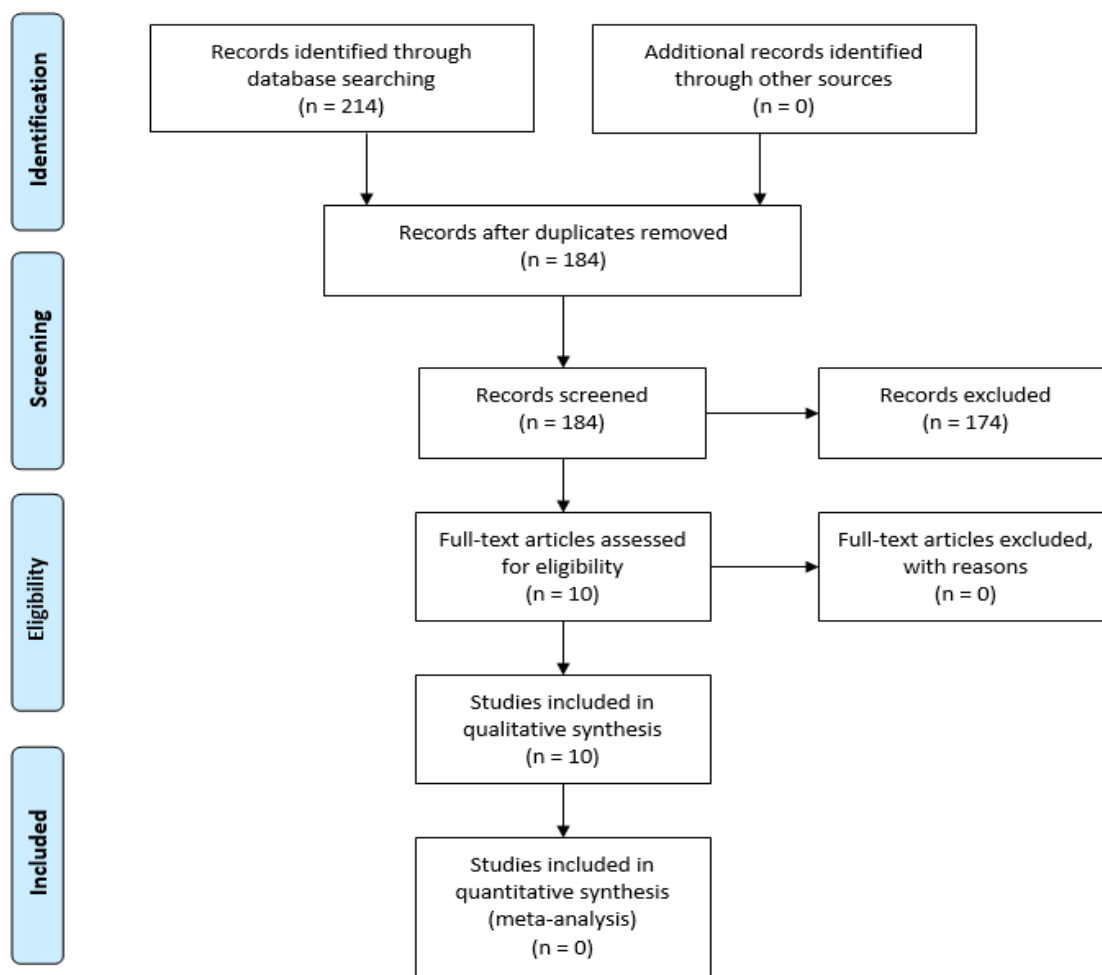


Fig.1: PRISMA flowchart.

3-RESULTS

Ten related studies were included (**Figure 1**). The results showed that 82.9% of the faculty members had a negative view of being evaluated by students (most of whom were women). However, 65.8% of the students had a positive view of faculty evaluation. The main characteristics of the selected studies are summarized in **Table 1** and the following:

1. A cross-sectional study in Ahwaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences on non-clinical faculty members aimed to investigate the relationship between the professor's evaluation scores

by students and the attitude of professors towards student evaluations. The results showed a significant difference between the mean attitude scores of low-rated and high-rated faculty members towards student ratings (2.98 ± 0.45 vs. 3.45 ± 0.38 , $p < 0.001$). The attitude scores of the low- and high-rated faculties ranged from 2.42 to 3.79 and from 2.23 to 4.55, respectively. It means there was a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of high- and low-rated faculty members towards student evaluation. Evidently, the faculty members with high rating scores have positive attitudes toward student ratings (29).

2. A descriptive cross-sectional study at Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences aimed to investigate the attitude of faculty members of Bandar-Abbas Medical University regarding their assessment by students and the effect of evaluation results on their educational activity. The results showed that 28.2% of faculty members believed that the students answered correctly, and the validity of the assessment results was intermediate according to 56.3% of opinions. Approximately 66.2% of them believed that students were not well explained about assessments. The impact of assessment results on their educational activities was high, intermediate, and low in 23.9%, 46.5%, and 29.6% of academic members, respectively. Only 8.5% and 47.9% of the faculty members believed that the students' answers to the questions had high and intermediate responsibility, respectively (30).

3. A cross-sectional study at Birjand University of Medical Sciences aimed to investigate the impression of faculty members and students from faculty evaluation by students. The results showed that 95% of faculty members (n=60, 30 people in basic sciences and 30 in clinical sciences) were aware of being evaluated by students. Also, 45% absolutely approved of the effectiveness of announcing evaluation results in improving teaching, 40% believed that students filling out the forms lacked a sense of responsibility and patience, and 30% thought this was not done honestly. As for the students, 40% (of 280) believed that the evaluation forms could not wholly evaluate the teaching quality of an academic member. In addition, 78.2% of students filled out the forms patiently enough, and 82.8% thought that the results of evaluations were credited very little (31).

4. A cross-sectional study at Ahwaz Jundishapur University of Medical

Sciences aimed to compare the evaluation scores of faculty members with positive and negative attitudes towards evaluation by students. The results showed that the mean evaluation scores of faculty members who agreed with the evaluation of faculty members by students were higher than those of faculty members who disagreed with this method ($p < 0.05$). There was a significant correlation between the average evaluation scores of faculties, their attitude towards the importance, and the application of student evaluation results ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$). This means that the faculty members who approved of the results of the student evaluations and used the students' opinions to improve their teaching process gained higher student satisfaction and better grades (32).

5. A descriptive, analytic, and cross-sectional study at Hamadan University of Medical Sciences aimed to determine faculty members' viewpoints regarding the teacher evaluation process by students. The results showed that most faculty members believed that assessment was effective in improving their teaching (68.8%). However, the most negative opinions were about using a single evaluation without attention to the differences in course contents (90.6%) and lack of showing professors' educational skills (79%). The results of the evaluation were accepted by only 34.3% of faculty members (33).

6. A cross-sectional study at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences aimed to investigate the views of basic sciences faculty members on the assessment by students. The results showed that 60.1% of faculty members believed that they were evaluated by student evaluation, 20.8% by doing research work, 19.5% by self-assessment, 9.16% by the group manager, 13% by peer method, 8.9% based on units taught, and 5.2% by the educational vice-chancellor of the school. Also, faculty

members considered personal motives (57.9%), dishonesty (85.6%), and inattentiveness and inaccuracy of students (89.1%) effective in filling out the evaluation forms (34).

7. A cross-sectional descriptive study aimed to investigate the views of faculty members and students of the Faculty of Medicine of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences regarding the evaluation of faculty members by students. The results showed that a significant percentage of professors (20-40%) had a negative attitude toward the awareness and honesty of students in completing evaluation forms. More than half of the faculty members had a negative attitude toward the whole evaluation process by students. According to the students, the priority of the evaluation was on the general aspects of being a teacher, the relationship between the educator and the student, and the transfer of concepts. However, these issues were less important from the teachers' points of view (35).

8. A cross-sectional study at Jahrom University of Medical Sciences aimed to investigate the view of faculty members and medical students regarding faculty teaching experiences. The results showed that 70.9% of faculty members were satisfied with the evaluation by students, 48.6% reported that feedback from such evaluation improved their teaching, and 48.8% thought that some students were not impartial. The majority of medical students (76.6%) reported that the teachers' communication skills were an important factor in faculty evaluation, 67.4% reported that they completed the faculty evaluation forms carefully, and 60.9% asserted that faculties who take difficult examinations received lower ratings in evaluation forms (36).

9. A cross-sectional descriptive study at the Islamic Azad University of Tehran aimed to compare the views of faculty members and students of the Faculty of

Dentistry regarding the evaluation of faculties by students and related factors. The results showed that of 70 faculty members, 17.1% had a positive and 82.9% a negative view of students' evaluation. The most important reasons for negative views were the lack of responsibility and honesty of students and their lack of justification in completing evaluation forms. Among 120 students, 65.8% had a positive attitude about the evaluation. Their most important reason was that the university officials valued the results of students' evaluations. Most of the professors who were against the survey of students were women ($p < 0.05$). It seems that the majority of the faculty members did not agree with being evaluated by the students, while the majority of the students sided with the evaluation of professors by the students (37).

10. A cross-sectional descriptive study at Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences aimed to assess the viewpoints of students and faculty members regarding faculty evaluation by students and managers. The results showed that most faculty members agreed to be evaluated by students and managers, but they believed that the students' participation in the evaluation should be higher than managers. Also, 63% of faculty members agreed with the evaluation by their colleagues, and 37% agreed with self-evaluation. 89% of the students agreed with the evaluation, while 53% believed that such evaluations had a positive effect. The results also showed that 62% of students thought that the faculty authorities did not choose the best time for evaluation. Evaluation criteria and indices were similar in the viewpoint of both students and faculty members (38).

Table-1: General characteristics and quality assessment of included studies (n=10).

Authors, References	Setting	Study design	Year published	Sample size	Main results	*Quality assessment result
Shakurnia, 29	Ahwaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences	cross-sectional study	2012	205 non-clinical faculty members	There was a significant difference between the mean scores of low-rated and high-rated faculty attitudes towards student ratings (2.98 ± 0.45 vs. 3.45 ± 0.38 , $p < 0.001$).	Medium
Aghamolaei et al., 30	Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences	cross-sectional study	2010	71 faculty member	About 66.2% of faculty members believed that the students were not well explained about the assessments. The impact of assessment results on their educational activities was high, intermediate and low in 23.9%, 46.5% and 29.6% of faculty members, respectively	Medium
Ziaee et al., 31	Birjand University of Medical Sciences	cross-sectional study	2006	Faculty members (60 individuals) and students (280 individuals)	45% of faculty members approved of the effectiveness of announcing evaluation grade in improving teaching, 40% believed that filling out the forms by students lacks a sense of responsibility and patience, and 30% thought the evaluation was not done honestly. Also, 40% of students believed that the evaluation forms could not to a great extent-evaluate teaching quality of an academic member. In addition, 82.8% thought that the results of evaluation are credited very little.	High
Shakurnia et al., 32	Ahwaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences	cross-sectional study	2012	184 faculty members	The results showed that the mean evaluation scores of faculties who agree with the students' evaluation were higher than the rest ($p < 0.05$). There was a significant correlation between the average evaluation scores of faculty members and their attitude towards the importance of students' evaluation results ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$).	Medium
Jamshidi et al., 33	Hamadan University of Medical Sciences	cross sectional study	2013	96 faculty members	The results showed that most faculty members believe that assessment is effective to improve their teaching (68.8%). However, the most negative opinions were about lack of attention to the content differences of the courses with the same evaluation (90.6%), and lack of showing professors' educational skills (79%).	Medium

Keykhaei et al., 34	Zahedan University of Medical Sciences	cross sectional study	2003	83 non-clinical faculty members	57.9% of faculty members considered personal motives, 85.6% dishonesty, 89.1% inattentiveness and inaccuracy of students as effective in completing the evaluation forms.	Medium
Ranjbar et al., 35	Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences	cross-sectional study	2007	Faculty members (95 individuals) and students (250 individuals)	Regarding the awareness and honesty of students in completing the evaluation forms, a significant percentage of professors 20-40% had a negative attitude, and more than half of the faculty members had a negative attitude towards the total evaluation process by students.	High
Amini et al., 36	Jahrom University of Medical Sciences	cross-sectional study	2008	100 medical students and 35 faculties	70.9% of faculty members were satisfied with evaluation by students. 48.8% of them thought that some students behave spitefully. 67.4% of students reported that they completed the faculty evaluation forms carefully.	High
Aghasi et al., 37	Islamic Azad University of Tehran	cross-sectional study	2018	120 medical students and 70 faculty members	17.1% of faculty members had a positive view and 82.9% had a negative view of students' evaluation. 65.8% of students had a positive attitude about the evaluation. Most of the professors who were against the survey of students were women ($p < 0.05$).	Medium
Moezi et al., 38	Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences	cross sectional study	2010	60 faculty members and 370 students	The results showed that most faculty members agreed to be evaluated by students and managers, but they believed that the student proportion for evaluation should be higher than the managers. The evaluation was accepted by 89% of the students and 53% of them believed that these evaluations had positive effect.	High

* STROBE tool (28).

4- DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to compare the viewpoints of Iranian students and faculty members about faculty evaluation by students. The results showed that 82.9% of faculty members had a negative view toward their evaluation by students. The most important reasons included a lack of attention to the differences in course contents within the same evaluation, low accuracy, lack of honesty, and failure to show the professors' educational skills. However, 65.8% of students had a positive view of faculty evaluation. There was a significant correlation between the mean evaluation scores of faculties and their attitude towards the importance and applicability of student evaluation results ($r=0.39$, $p<0.05$).

The evaluation of university faculty members is performed in different ways; by students, interviews, observations, self-evaluating, colleagues, and research and scientific works (5, 6). The evaluation of professors emphasizes the improvement of educational activities and provides appropriate feedback to professors to better education (39-41). It is a necessary tool that helps decision-making and determining the correct teaching policy, especially at the university level (42). The most common evaluation method of activities and characteristics of professors is the evaluation by students, with supporters and stern opponents alike (40).

Opponents believe that in many cases, the students' evaluation of a professor is affected by factors such as the grade received from that professor, their gender, academic status, the popularity of the professor, the number of students in the class, the difficulty and type of the course, the level of education and behavior of the professor, the use of entertaining teaching methods, and the general characteristics, reputation, and credibility of the professor (39, 40, 43).

Some professors also believe that personality traits and general and environmental characteristics affect people's understanding and judgments, and there is no reason why students would be immune from such bias in evaluating their professors (19). The results of a study at Zahedan University of Medical Sciences showed that professors considered personal bias (57%), dishonesty (85%), and inattentiveness and inaccuracy of students (89%) effective in completing evaluation forms (34). Ranjbar et al. examined the views of faculty members and students of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences (Medical School) regarding evaluation by students and concluded that the method of evaluation is appropriate, but there is a considerable negative attitude among professors toward the awareness and honesty of the students in completing the questionnaire (35).

Another study in Birjand on professors' point of view regarding evaluation by students showed that 40% of professors believed that students filled out forms without a sense of responsibility and patience, and 30% considered dishonesty was involved (31). In a study in Jahrom, approximately 70% of professors were satisfied with the method of teacher evaluation by students. However, 48.8% believed that students were affected by personal bias in completing evaluation forms (36). In a survey titled "Viewpoints of Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences professors regarding the evaluation of professors by students", Aghamolaei et al. found that the majority of professors considered this type of evaluation weak but considered evaluation necessary, which should be done by experts and re-evaluated (30).

A study titled "The trend of evaluation results of the professors of Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences in Ahvaz in a ten-year period" by Shakournia et al. showed that although the community of

evaluating students changed during the study period, the evaluation by students has remained stable, and it is necessary to revise the method of teaching and skills of the professors to improve the evaluation scores (44). The findings of various studies show that most universities use students' evaluation of professors as a measure of the effectiveness of education (10-13). However, some studies indicate that students' opinions may be affected by factors unrelated to the subject of professor evaluation (45).

Scriven believes that students are the first observers of teacher behaviors and classroom processes and are the best judges of what they have learned (46). However, experts state that the students' evaluation of their professors should not be "norm-oriented" but "criterion-oriented" based on a system that evaluates faculty members according to a set of standards, which is superior to ranking faculty members on the basis of specific cases relative to each other (47). Despite the merits of the evaluation of professors by students, using their results in practice has many difficulties, including the student's lack of knowledge about the characteristics of a great teacher and good teaching, the effect of previous experiences, the effect of age and gender of the student on their judgment, personal characteristics of professors, and the number of students and the level of difficulty and type of lesson, among others (46).

Similarly, various studies in Iran indicate that using only the students' judgment to evaluate the professors' performance can be damaging to their reputation (17, 18, 48), and lead to the interference of the students' personal opinions in the evaluation process (36). As a result, the professors do not believe in the validity of this type of evaluation (15). The primary purpose of an evaluation is to identify the the strengths and weaknesses in teaching behavior of professors to improve the

quality of their work (31, 32, 42). Consequently, student evaluation of the effectiveness of professors' teaching, which is used for individual decisions and as feedback to improve and promote education, requires a valid, standard, and unbiased form (49). In a study titled "Viewpoints of professors and students of Birjand University of Medical Sciences regarding the evaluation of professors by students", Ziaee et al. showed that evaluating the teaching method of professors aims to improve teaching and promote better education by academic staff. As students are better aware of the teaching process than education professionals and can comment on its status, such evaluation can be useful when included in a comprehensive teacher evaluation program, and the resulting data should have the required validity and reliability (13).

Saif believes that students' evaluation of teachers is mostly influenced by the teacher's behavior and work methods rather than the quality of lessons and learning. The self-assessment method is another appropriate method for investigating and improving the education of professors. Since the primary goal of evaluating the educational activities of professors is to identify problems in the educational method, the results of the self-assessment of professors are essential. The best evaluation results are obtained when professors first specify the teaching materials and then observe and evaluate each other's teaching (42).

5- CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of an evaluation is to determine the strengths and weaknesses in the professors' teaching behavior to improve the quality of their work. Using the opinion of students to evaluate the quality of teaching and the educational activities of professors is one of the common methods in educational

centers and has expanded with time. Nevertheless, opinions on this evaluation method vary among professors and students. The results of this study showed that 82.9% of faculty members had a negative view of their evaluation by students. Most of the professors who were against evaluation by students were women. The most important reasons included a lack of attention to the content differences of courses within the same evaluation, low accuracy, lack of honesty, and failure to show professors' educational skills. However, 65.8% of students had a positive view of faculty evaluation. Still, 82.8% of students believed that the results of the evaluation were credited too little.

The results also showed that the mean evaluation scores of the faculty members with a positive attitude to the importance and applicability of the students' evaluation results were higher than those who were against the students' evaluation, indicating a significant correlation between the mean evaluation scores of professors and their attitude towards the importance and applicability of student evaluation results. Based on the findings, to produce an accurate and reliable evaluation of the academic faculty members of a university several evaluation methods can be combined and the evaluation by students should not be used as the sole criterion for judgment and decision-making. It is necessary to design and develop measures to improve the attitude of professors regarding their evaluation by students and bring the views of these two groups closer regarding the evaluation of academic staff by students.

6- AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Study conception or design: AP, and MG; Data analyzing and draft manuscript preparation: MG, RK, NM, and MA; Critical revision of the paper: FS and MG; Supervision of the research: AP and FS; Final approval of the version to be published: AP, MG, RK, NM, MA, and FS.

7- CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.

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