

Gender Disparities and the Limitations of Traditional Feedback Mechanisms in Virtual Deanery-Led Medical Education

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Abstract

Deanery-led teaching plays a crucial role in the development of Higher Specialty Trainees in the UK. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditionally face-to-face educational program transitioned to an online format. Feedback forms were also adapted for this new virtual context. This three-year study examined the feedback provided by Trainees during monthly regional deanery teachings across multiple medical departments.

Utilising "rating" and "impact" numeric values, the study categorised the feedback based on the gender of both trainees and speakers. These rating scales range from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates poor performance and 5 represents excellent delivery. An mean difference of 0.22 to 0.35 points in this context is statistically and educationally significant.

Statistical analysis revealed gender disparities. Female speakers received on lower ratings from male trainees by 0.22 points, compared to their female counterparts. Conversely, male speakers received higher ratings from male trainees, with a mean difference of 0.24 points. In terms of impact—a measure reflecting the perceived utility of the session—female speakers scored mean 0.4 points lower from male trainees, whereas male speakers scored an 0.35 points higher.

While these findings may be influenced by confounding factors, they highlight an inherent gender bias in the feedback mechanisms examined. Tools, such as Likert scales, are known to have their limitations. While we updated teaching sessions to meet challenges, an opportunity was missed to update our feedback mechanisms.

In summary, our study highlights gender-based disparities in educational feedback and raises questions about the adaptability and fairness of traditional feedback tools in an increasingly virtual academic environment. The data emphasise the urgent need for a comprehensive review

of existing feedback mechanisms, ensuring they are suited for our rapidly evolving educational methods.

References (maximum three)

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