



Student and Faculty Perception of Objective Structured Viva Voce (Osvv) As A Reliable, Objective and Valid Method of Oral Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of the study was to obtain students and faculty's perception regarding Objective Structured Viva Voce and compare with the traditional viva.

Method: Fifty students of 1st MBBS voluntarily took part in the study. All the students were subjected to oral assessment by both the methods i.e traditional and OSVV. Feedback was taken from students and faculty.

Results: Though OSVV is a more objective and better tool of oral assessment it has a few limitations. Some modification may be required in OSVV.

KEYWORDS : Oral assessment, OSVV, reliable, valid

INTRODUCTION:

Students in many disciplines in higher education are assessed by the three traditional methods of written assessments, practical examinations and the viva-voce. Each of the above assessment methods have their own advantages and drawbacks based on assessment topics, types of skills to be assessed, student personality etc.

Oral assessment is an important component of student evaluation and provides greater insight into student understanding, problem-solving ability as well as communication skills. However, it is quite often observed that certain students perform consistently differently in written assessments and in evaluation procedures that involve direct interaction with faculty.

Oral assessment in formative and summative examinations is done in the traditional manner. The main objection to traditional viva as a tool of assessment is lack of consistency and reliability (1).

The procedure of Objective Structured Viva Voce is a method of conducting a viva-voce in a manner that seeks to minimize variation due to a variety of reasons including skewed coverage of topics, examiner bias, luck factor and an inconsistent level of difficulty.

This study was undertaken to bring into perspective the various facets of viva-voce examination when conducted in the traditional and the Objective Structured Viva Voce format as perceived by the two stakeholder groups in question i.e. students and faculty.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- (i) To obtain students' perception of Objective Structured Viva Voce vis-a-vis Traditional Viva
- (ii) To obtain the faculty perception of Objective Structured Viva Voce vis-a-vis Traditional Viva
- (iii) To find a reliable and valid method of oral assessment of students

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The study was conducted in the Department of Physiology at the K. J. Somaiya Medical College and Research Centre, Mumbai after taking institutional ethical committee permission. Fifty students of the first year MBBS voluntarily participated in the study. Three faculty members were involved in the conduction of viva voce examinations. The faculty members were sensitized to the procedure and together created a question bank three months prior to the actual conduction of the oral examinations ensuring an adequate time interval to minimize an overlap of questions between the structured viva procedure and the traditional viva. The questions were based on two systems of Physiology, namely, Cardiovascular System and Haematology.

Drawing from the above question bank, a card system was created for conducting Objective Structured Viva Voce (OSVV). Each card carried five questions of increasing level of difficulty for a total of 10 marks. The first two questions were of low level of difficulty and carried 1 mark each. The next two questions were of moder-

ate level of difficulty and carried 2 marks each. The final question was of a higher difficulty level and carried 4 marks. Care was taken to ensure that 70% of the questions were included from the 'must know', 30% from the 'nice to know' and 10% from the 'desirable to know' categories as prescribed by the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences respectively. Different coloured cards were prepared for each system.

On day 1 students were divided in three groups and assessed by traditional viva by three faculty members. On day 2 the students were again divided in the same three groups and assessed by the same examiners by OSVV. Each of the examiners got 20 cards (10 cards from each system). Using the lottery method each student drew one card of each colour and answered as many questions possible in a ten minute period. Students could answer the questions in a random order. Students having finished the OSVV procedure were not permitted to interact with their study peers who had not yet undergone the same.

Duration of both types of viva-voce procedures was the same i.e. 10 minutes. Feedback was obtained from the faculty by way of an interview which consisted of open-ended questions. Student feedback was obtained using both Likert scale consisting of closed-ended questions and by the use of additional open-ended questions.

RESULTS:

STUDENT FEEDBACK:

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire administered to students the following inferences could be drawn

- (i) 52% of the students preferred the OSVV format, whereas 48% were in favour of traditional viva
- (ii) 78% of students were of the opinion that uniformity of difficulty level was

maintained in OSVV

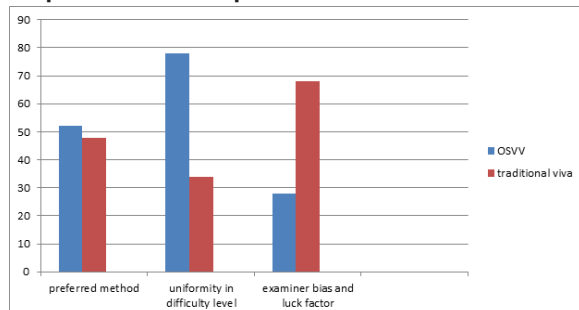
(iii) 68% of students believed that the 'halo factor', examiner bias and the luck element was more prevalent in a traditional viva

(iv) Both the methods were rated at par in terms of adequate syllabus coverage, stress factor and the 'atmosphere' of the viva

(v) They, however, also opined that though it may be easier to obtain a passing grade in an OSVV but the power of discrimination between average students and high achievers may be compromised and the latter group of students may not be in a position to perform to their full potential

(vi) Students also believed that unlike the traditional viva where more questions could be accommodated, in the OSVV system additional cannot be asked questions despite the availability of time

Graph 1 : Students response



FACULTY FEEDBACK:

- (i) Faculty feedback indicated that the two variables that were minimised in the OSVV procedure were examiner bias and luck factor
- (ii) Faculty also opined that a uniformity of difficulty level was ensured in the OSVV procedure
- (iii) The OSVV procedure was found more labour-intensive in terms of the involved groundwork
- (iv) It was felt that traditional viva had a flexibility factor and faculty could manoeuvre the viva-voce both in terms of topics and speed according to student needs and responses.
- (v) Faculty also responded that the OSVV procedure entailed minimal faculty-student interactivity due to a pre-determined structure and hence was prone to increasing monotony especially towards the end of the session
- (vi) In the OSVV system additional questions cannot be asked despite the availability of time

Table 1 :Advantages of each method

Sr.No	OSVV	Traditional
1	Objective	Better power of discrimination between students
2	Minimal examiner bias	Second chance can be given to students
3	Uniformity in difficulty level	Less ground work
4	Coverage of the entire syllabus	Gradually builds up the viva

DISCUSSION:

Assessment is an integral part of any educational process. Assessment drives learning. Assessment also is an effective feedback not only to students but also to the teachers. It can help improve teaching learning methods (2). Oral examination is a tool which is flexible, covers various topics and can assess knowledge which is difficult to judge by written examination if sufficient time is allotted. It also judges the presentation and communication skills especially if used during practical examination. It tests the alertness of the students and ability to create an answer under stress. It allows the student to justify and explain his concept.

A good method of assessment should be valid, reliable and objective. It should be able to discriminate between average students and high achievers. Viva voce should be conducted in an environment not very stressful to students. As students who are confident may perform better than students who are nervous because of the fear factor. Anxiety can decrease the students performance in viva voce. (3) OSVV is a new concept in assessment of students(4). Students feel that oral assessment by the traditional method though important is highly unreliable. In traditional viva there is a lot of examiner bias and variations in the questions asked.(5) Marking system may also not be uniform in traditional viva. Also some times the examiners are unable to cover all the topics in the allotted time. As the viva extends the later students may get less time and the questions asked maybe less. The difficulty level also may be variable. Hence the study to find out whether OSVV is a better method in comparison to traditional

viva. The feedback from both the students and faculty was considered. In OSVV since the question bank and cards are prepared earlier by all faculty members there is uniformity in difficulty level. The marking system is also standardised. Hence this minimises examiner variability in giving marks. The examiner bias in marking can be further minimised by creating model answer for questions and proper training of examiners.(6) But the students also felt that OSVV is not a good method for discriminating between excellent students and mediocre students. Students also believed that unlike the traditional viva where more questions could be accommodated, in the OSVV system additional questions cannot be asked despite the availability of time. Faculty also felt that OSVV was better in terms of uniformity and coverage of the topic. But since there was minimal interaction with students it may become monotonous for the faculty. Responses also indicated faculty, like students, observed that the OSVV procedure left no provision for asking more questions in the event of time left over after student completing the prescribed questions and hence discriminative power between various student categories also was found wanting in OSVV. Also a limitation with OSVV was if the student did not know the answers in the question card he was not given another card. During the study only two systems from Physiology syllabus were considered. The time may be a limiting factor if OSVV was to be used as a summative assessment tool.

CONCLUSION:

OSVV is a better assessment tool in regards to consistency, reliability and validity. Some modifications in OSVV are needed to increase the power of discrimination between high achievers and low achievers before adopting this method in summative assessment. Further studies are required to see OSVV feasibility during summative assessment.

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