

## A Survey of the Academic Staff Personality Features Affecting the Students' Interest in Islamic Education Courses in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

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**Abstract:** *Islamic education courses are of special importance in educational system of Islamic Republic of Iran; therefore, to improve the educational status of this course, there is a need to recognize its status and needs in order to remove the challenges in this regard.*

**Material and method:** *This cross-sectional study was conducted to determine the personality features of faculty members affecting the university students' interest in Islamic education courses in SUMS. The participants consisted of 1300 university students selected through random sampling. They had already passed one or two Islamic education courses. The data were collected through a questioner during 4 months and analyzed using SPSS.*

**Results:** *According to the results obtained in this study, the effect of the faculty members' personality features was considered important by 88% of the participants. The results of Chi-square and Fisher's exact test revealed that there was a significant relationship between the students' year of university education and different factors such as the lecturer's personality ( $P < 0.05$ )*

**Conclusion:** *It was concluded that the Islamic education lecturers' personality is important for achievement of goals of these courses.*

**Keywords:** *faculty member, personality features, university students, Islamic education*

### Introduction

In various educational systems, based on national religious objectives, different educational courses are designed and the students are required to pass them. In some systems, the students are trained in religious subjects as well. Some of these courses are designed aiming at changing the students' religious behavior. In Islamic Republic of Iran, as stated in section 3 of Supreme

Council of Cultural Revolution, "reform in educational institutes and universities based on appropriate Islamic culture ..." is among the goals of reform in universities and courses such as Islamic education have been devised to be included (Yousefi Loye, 1997, p19). Thus, if we aim to improve the students' spirit of religious commitment, beliefs and faith, we need to pay special attention to Islamic education courses. Religious training should be focused in our universities besides scientific subjects

Due to the above-mentioned points, Islamic education courses have an educational role due to the fact that the aim of teaching such courses is preservation of religion as the underlying base of the society and continuation of religious culture which is attainable through training (Keshavarz, 2008). Training has been considered as a combination of the impact of nature or other creatures on human's wisdom and determination. According to John Stewart, "training includes what we do or others do for us to guide us move closer to our perfection." (as cited in Karimi, 1999). The efficacy of Islamic education courses has an essential role in this regard; therefore, the authorities should take measures to hold Islamic education classes more fruitful.

Various workshops have been held during years and different studies have been conducted on the strategies to be used in efficacious classes and the influential factors, such as the impact of quantity and teaching methodology (Safavi, 1990), sex segregation and complementary courses, discussions based on reason, applicability of courses, lecturer's concern, lecturer's practical ethics (Farahzadi, 2007). Since the efficacy of any approach depends on the target group's interest in the subject, to reach the goals, it is necessary to survey the factors influencing the addressee of such courses. In previous years, some studies have focused on the relationship between the efficacy and success on these courses. For example, Yousefi Loye has done a search published in Islamic Education Journal (1997). This study is a report on the Islamic education courses but it is done generally rather than focusing on a specific group of students.

Therefore, the present research did not consider the influential factors and merely focused on one of the factors influencing the students' interest in Islamic education courses, i.e. the lecturer. Study of these factors may contribute to finding strategies for increasing the students' interest and devise method of efficaciousness. Secondly, this study aims to explore the students' wishes and intentions. Moreover, a specific group of students, i.e. medical and paramedical students, are the target group of this study. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted on this subject. Based on the above-mentioned points, the following research question was posed:

1. Are the lecturer's personal characteristics, mood, and behavior influential in enhancement of the students' interest in Islamic education courses?

Based on the research question, the following null hypothesis was made:

1. The lecturer's personal characteristics, mood, and behavior are not influential in enhancement of the students' interest in Islamic education courses.

## Material and methods

The present study was conducted on the medical and paramedical students in different years of their university education. 300 associate, BS and Ms students studying in 14 majors in 6 faculties of SUMS participated in this study. Of them, 232 students responded our research question. Due to the variety of majors, large number of students, and number of majors, in this cross-sectional study we used categorized random sampling.

A questionnaire with 30 yes-no questions was designed. The data were collected through personal attendance and distribution of questionnaire among the students. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, version 15. A p value of  $<0.05$  was considered as significant.

## Data analysis

To answer the research question of the study, Chi-square and fisher's exact tests were used. Also, descriptive statistics, frequency, percentage were employed in this study.

## Results

The results of the distribution based on sex revealed that out of 232 students, there were 47 (23%) female and 157 (77%) male students. Figure 1 shows the results.

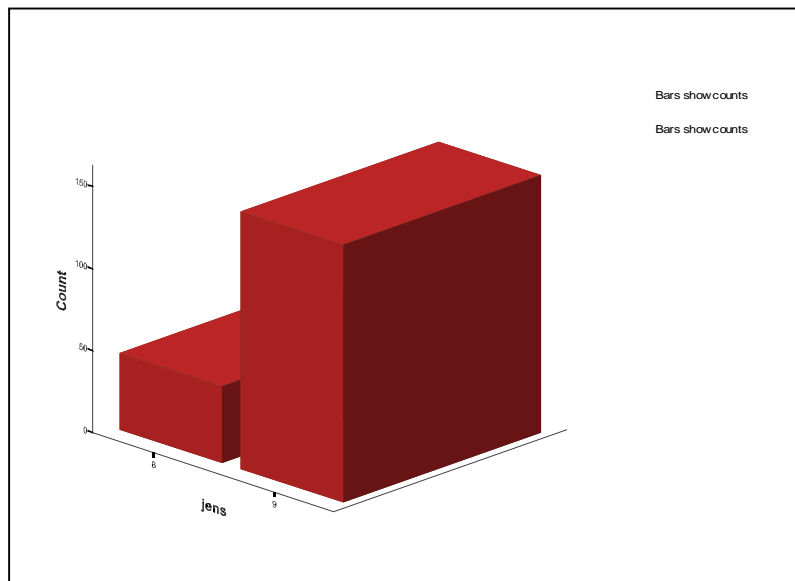


Figure 1. Distribution of the participants based on gender

As shown in Figure 2, as to the efficacy of the humorous character of the lecturers, it was revealed that 202 students (87.8%) responded positively (yes) and 28 (12.2 %) negatively (no).

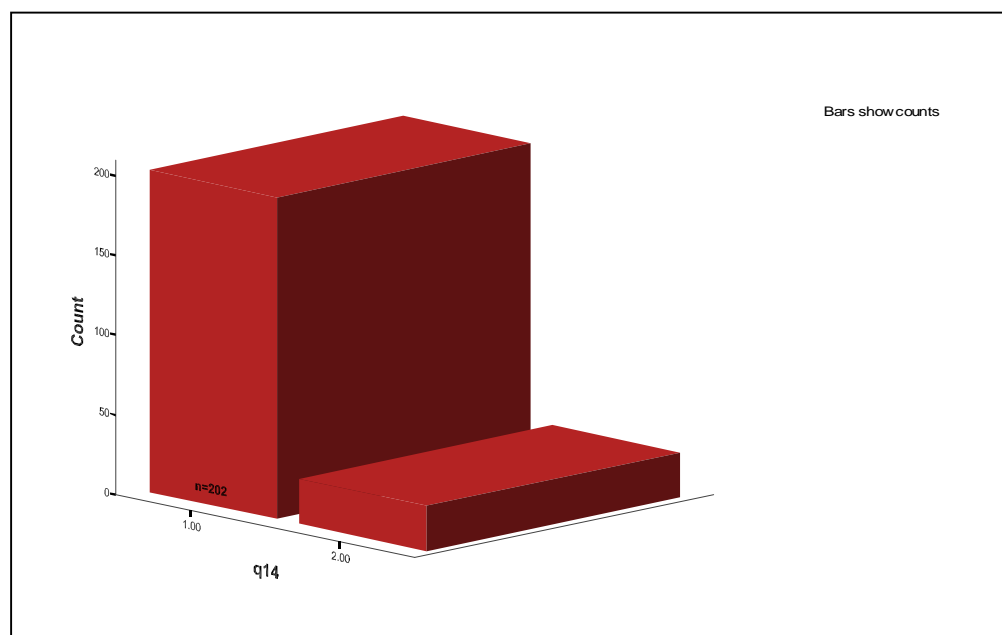


Figure 2. the efficacy of the humorous character of the lecturer

As to inclusion of other subjects which are not included in the syllabus in class discussions and its effectiveness, the results showed that 187 students (80.6%) agreed and 38 (16.4%) disagreed. (Figure 3)

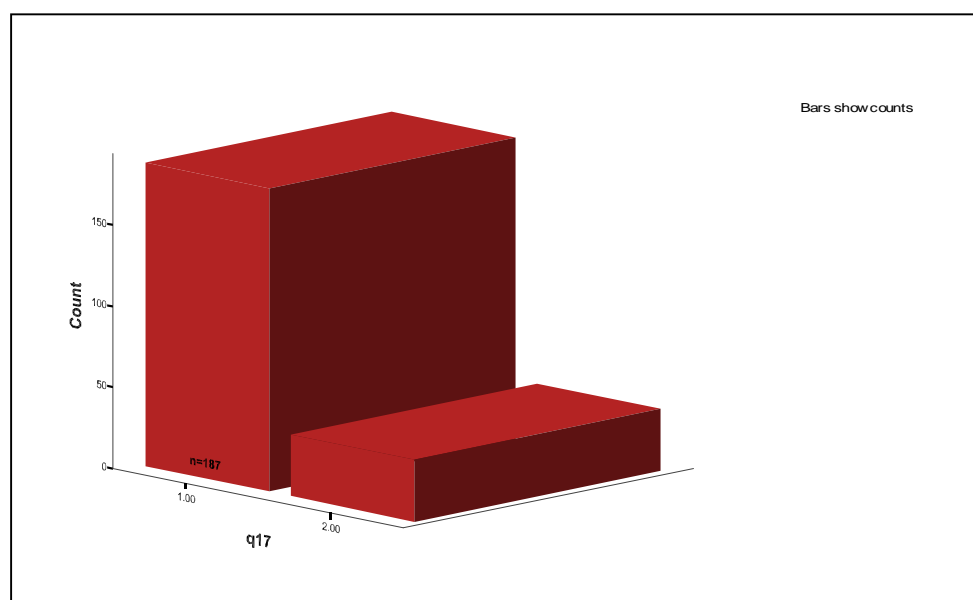


Figure 3. The effect of inclusion of other subjects in class discussions

With respect to the lecturer's spiritual mystical approach and its effect on the efficacy of Islamic education courses, it was revealed that 197 students (86%) agreed and 32 (14%). The results are shown in Figure 4.

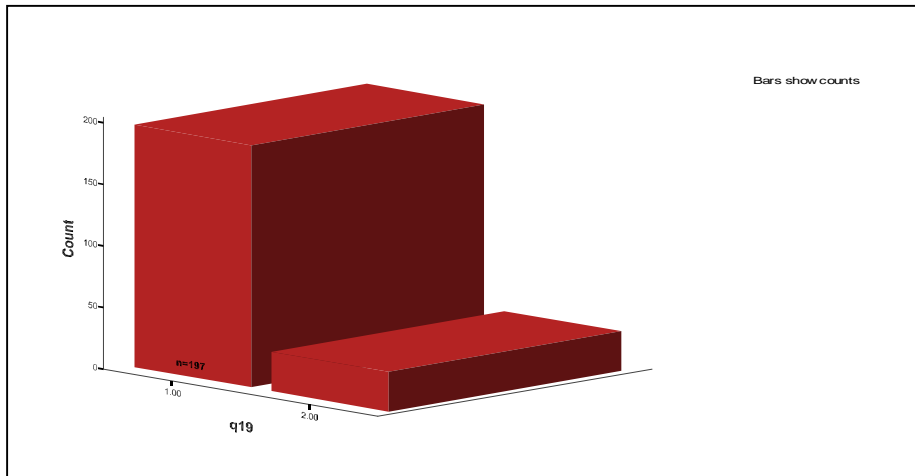


Figure 4. The effect of the lecturer's mystical approach

As to the impact of teaching formally on the effectiveness of Islamic education courses, the results showed that 71 students (30.6%) considered this method of teaching necessary and 155 students (66.8%) believed that it is not appropriate to teach formally. (Table 5)

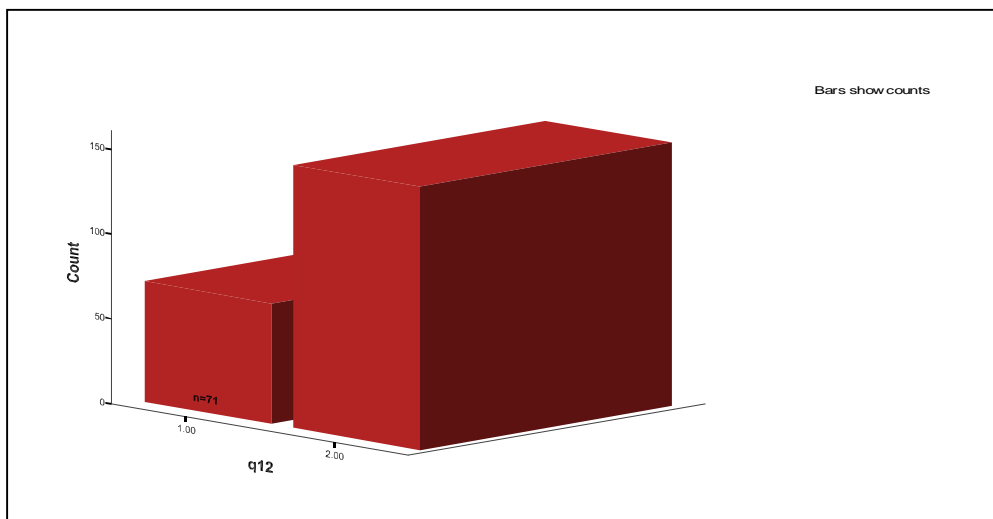


Figure 5. The effect of formal teaching

## Discussion

To test the study's hypothesis, i.e. the lecturer's personal characteristics, mood, and behavior are not influential in enhancement of the students' interest in Islamic education courses, we used Chi-square test. The students' views as to these factors were analyzed. The degree of freedom in this test was  $a=0.05$ . After the analysis of data in SPSS, the following results were obtained:

1- Based on the results of Chi-square test, there was a significant relationship between the students' interest and the lecturer's humor ( $p<0.05$ ). 175 students (86.2%) believed that this feature is necessary and 28 (13.8%) considered it unnecessary.

2- it was also found that there was a significant relationship among the associate, BS and MS students' views as to the necessity of adopting a formal method of teaching by the lecturer ( $p<0.05$ ). 64 students (32.8%) regarded this method as necessary and 131 (67.2%) as unnecessary.

3- There was a significant difference among the student's studying in different degrees (associate, BS, MS) on the necessity of lecturers' information on the current issues as to art, sport, politics, etc.. 148 students (76.07%) believed that it was necessary for the lecturers to have such information and 45 (23.3%) reported it is not essential.

4- A statistically significant relationship was observed among the students of different degrees as to appointing female lecturers for female students ( $p<0.05$ ). According to the results, 49 students (26.1%) viewed it as necessary and 139 (73.9%) as unnecessary.

## Conclusion

One of the findings of this study was the students' tendency toward the use of humorous lecturers. According to Shafipour and Khodadai (2010), Islamic education lecturers should be stylistically dressed. Our results are in the same line with those of their study. Also, the findings of Heydari and Shameli (2010) revealed that the students look at their teacher as a role model more than they pay attention to their degree, experience, methodology and even their appearance.

Since the students are young learners, liveliness is one of their characteristics. On the other hand, Islamic education courses usually need concentration and variety, so the lecturer has to freshen the atmosphere of the class. Therefore, it is recommended that in addition to enhancing their knowledge, the lecturers should apply appropriate humors or jokes so that the students' interest and tendency to such courses increase. However, based on the results of our study, female students are less interested in the lecturer's humorous mood. Thus, it is suggested that the lecturers should adopt different methodologies in classes with different genders.

The present research revealed that the students are inclined toward discussion on different issues such as art, sport and politics in class. Since Islamic education is one of the courses which is

directly related to the students' life and beliefs, and on the other hand, today's youth have access to different issues in this era of relations and technology, it is necessary for the lecturers to be familiar with current issues so that they can add variety to their class and help students accept their views; they should believe in the necessity and relationship between class discussions and their daily life issues. Some of the experts in psychology and education believe that religious courses should be taught indirectly because religion is intermingled with people's life. Therefore, limiting the religious course to a specific textbook at a specific time will separate religion from other dimensions of life. Religion is not like art, etc. which are related to a part of human life, so it cannot be restricted to specific framework related to a part of human life and cannot be presented in a book. In all, religion is involved in all dimensions of one's life including art, literature, science, etc. (Karimi, 2006). Therefore, it is recommended that the lecturers should update their information and knowledge about such issues so that they can contribute to enhancing the students' interest.

Moreover, it was revealed in this study that there was a significant relationship between the views of students in different degrees and their interest in class discussion on various issues; the higher the degree, the more the students' interest. Therefore, we recommend that it should be taken into account by lecturers. Also, the students proved to be interested in discussion about mystical and spiritual issues in class; this is due to the nature of Islamic education courses which is involved with religious beliefs and on the other hand discusses devotion, submission, love, and human's need to a creator and tendency toward faith based on love rather than reason. However, the students are interested in logical justification. On the other hand, faith is an internal spiritual condition which is related to one's heart, so it is suggested that the lecturers should use poems which stimulate the students' feeling or real stories about the messengers and lovers' relationship with God to increase their interest, thereby enhancing Islamic education courses' efficacy.

According to the results of this study, female students do not believe that a female lecturer should teach them in class in spite of the fact that naturally they should be more comfortable with a female teacher. Further research is required on the factors contributing to such feeling by female students. To reach better results, it is suggested that other variables as to the present research should be investigated in different types of universities (non-medical universities, open university, etc.)

It was found that the university students like the lecturers to use informal approaches in class; it shows that formal methods of teaching are less effective in the learners' emotions and mind. It should be mentioned that Islamic education lecturers are used to applying terms which are less comprehensible for others (this also is true with religious books). We recommend that the lecturers attempt to feel like the learners and speak like them; this approach is also recommended to be used in teacher training courses and workshops by lecturers.

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