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An Analysis of the Challenges in the Teaching-Learning Process for Students in the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, from the Instructors' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The teaching–learning process represents a fundamental component of higher education. Given the pivotal role of instructors in ensuring educational effectiveness, this study aimed to explore instructors' perceptions of the challenges and shortcomings in the teaching–learning process at the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch.

Methods: This qualitative study employed a Grounded Theory approach at the conceptual organization level. Using purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 faculty members (9 males and 6 females). The collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes reflecting instructors' experiences and perspectives.

Results: Analysis of the interview data yielded six main themes and 18 subthemes related to perceived deficiencies in the teaching–learning process. The main themes encompassed challenges in teaching and assessment methods, university policies and regulations, student motivation and engagement, student–instructor interaction, educational infrastructure and facilities, and workload and time constraints. These findings highlight systemic, pedagogical, and contextual factors influencing educational effectiveness.

Conclusions: The study identified substantial shortcomings in multiple dimensions of the teaching–learning process. Addressing these issues through improved instructional strategies, policy reform, enhanced resource allocation, and strengthened student–instructor interaction may significantly enhance the quality and effectiveness of higher education.

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Introduction

Higher education represents the forefront of innovation and is a critical stage for the development of any country. Its quality and efficacy contribute to maintaining standards in the teaching-learning process (Fadavi et al., 2019). In developed nations, we witness continuous changes in educational programs. The rapid and major transformations occurring in the global community have compelled higher education systems to respond not only to individual needs but also to global issues, and to train skilled and expert individuals capable of keeping pace with contemporary society. Recent studies highlight that this adaptability is crucial for maintaining student engagement in an increasingly digital landscape. For instance, Trolian (2024) emphasizes that higher education institutions must now prioritize holistic engagement strategies that encompass behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions to foster academic success. Similarly, the integration of emerging technologies, such as AI-driven learning tools, has become a defining factor in modern pedagogical effectiveness (Schön et al., 2023). One fundamental change in this regard is the adoption of diverse and active methods in the teaching-learning process. This process itself has become a significant part of human life; today, knowledge must be acceptable, engaging, applicable, and something students can utilize in their daily lives based on their own abilities. Universities are regarded as major instruments for national development because, on one hand, they are the cornerstone of human resource development, and on the other, they are mechanisms for the advancement of science and technology (Stensaker, 2017). The contemporary higher education system has three primary functions: education, research, and service provision. Education, as one of these functions, plays a vital role in training skilled and specialized human resources (Poursafar et al., 2015). The progress and advancement of human societies depend on supplying skilled and specialized human resources to effectively manage various sectors. The teaching-learning process is considered the core of universities; however, due to the complex mission, objectives, and duties of universities, the concept of quality in teaching and learning has become intricate and multidimensional. The learning process is one that develops learners' capacity and ability to reanalyze, engage in dialogue, propose various solutions to problems, and select the correct solution (Darabi et al., 2018).

A pathological study of the teaching-learning process involves identifying the challenges and problems stemming from a country's diverse cultural, social, economic, political, historical, and

institutional contexts, which adversely affect this process for its members. A higher education system is recognized as high-quality when it is free from deficiencies, as these shortcomings represent flaws within the system, preventing the desired outcomes or results from being achieved. Given the shortcomings and deficiencies in the educational process and implemented programs at any educational institution, investigating factors affecting the quality of education and teaching is considered a sensitive and important issue requiring in-depth research and examination (Khadivi et al., 2018). Fostering a culture of teaching-learning is a shared responsibility between instructors and even students (Aghazadeh & Norouz Zadeh, 2013). Therefore, changes must occur in the quality of the teaching-learning process and the teaching methods of university instructors to achieve this important goal. Instructors play a significant role in attaining the primary objective of higher education (Jansna et al., 2019).

Universities have various dimensions, but perhaps teaching methods and the interaction between instructor and student can be considered its most crucial aspect. In this context, the components of teaching-learning are among the most important tools for realizing the missions of the educational system. Learning is a primary goal of educational systems worldwide, but what is crucial is the extent and degree of learning. The use of traditional teaching methods and content delivery by the instructor, coupled with the rote memorization of taught material by students, cannot lead to deep learning that prompts learners to think critically (Mehr Mohammadi et al., 2014).

Utilizing diverse teaching styles tailored to the varied needs of learners, along with incorporating a variety of methods and teaching styles during the teaching-learning process, can not only increase the extent and depth of learning but also encourage lifelong learning among students. On the other hand, instructors and their interactions and relationships with students lie at the heart of university teaching-learning activities. Key performance indicators related to them are of considerable importance, and many university activities are focused on this academic pillar; in other words, one of the primary interactive loops within the university pertains to instructor-student interactions and enhancing the quality of educational services aimed at developing student competencies (Zolfagharian et al., 2018, p. 183).

Gershenson asserted that the quality of the instructor-student relationship impacts students' academic achievement motivation (Gershenson, 2016). Therefore, a lack of effective communication skills on the part of instructors can affect student performance. Indeed, with

weakness and inability in establishing these communications, positive and constructive interactions between instructor and student may not form, and despite significant investment in the educational system, the desired benefits may not be realized (Chan et al., 2017).

Research on teaching quality in universities is a significant topic that provides appropriate feedback to higher education authorities for analyzing educational issues. Universities must establish a long-term quality policy for survival and development (Farshad & Azizi, 2023). However, effective teaching is a complex structure. By understanding the factors that improve their teaching quality, instructors can shift their teaching from a knowledge transmission theory to knowledge constructed by the student. Instructors must not only identify their strengths and weaknesses but also strive to enhance them (Javadipour et al., 2022).

Consequently, there is a need to address the existing gaps in the teaching-learning process. Key shortcomings include the failure to link curriculum completion with the equivalent and efficient transfer of knowledge (Otmaram, 2021). The present study explores the characteristics and dimensions of the experiences of faculty members regarding the teaching-learning process as a fundamental issue. What has not been addressed thus far are the existing deficiencies and problems, the challenges ahead, mapping the current situation, and ultimately, strategies to confront these challenges.

The primary objective of the present study is to investigate the instructors' perceptions of the deficiencies in the teaching-learning process within the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch. This research examines the perspectives and experiences of instructors as the central and key axis of the teaching-learning process, identifies weaknesses in the educational process, and evaluates current teaching methods. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the instructors' perceptions of the deficiencies in the existing teaching-learning process within the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch?

Material and Methods

Research Design

The present study, as part of a larger research project, was conducted with the aim of identifying the challenges in the teaching-learning process based on the perspectives of faculty members. To

achieve this objective, the Grounded Theory method was employed at the conceptual organization level. Specifically, a semi-structured interview method was utilized to investigate the participants' views on the challenges of implementing the teaching-learning process.

Population and Participants

The participants included 15 faculty members (9 men and 6 women), all of whom were teaching at the undergraduate level in the Faculty of Psychology, Social Sciences and Education sciences at the Science and Research Branch. The participants ranged in age from 35 to 58 years old, with teaching experience spanning from 5 to 25 years. They represented various specializations within psychology and social sciences, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives on the teaching-learning process.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection process began with the design and development of an interview protocol. The primary tool utilized in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. For this purpose, the key areas of interest to the researchers were first identified, including faculty experiences, challenges in the learning process, and the effectiveness of teaching methods. General themes covering the research questions were determined. Subsequently, a number of open-ended and potential follow-up questions were designed:

1. What is your understanding of the deficiencies and problems existing in the teaching-learning process at the university?
2. What are the main factors causing these deficiencies?
3. What impact have these deficiencies had on the quality of education? (What consequences and effects have they had?)
4. What solutions do you propose to address these obstacles and deficiencies? (Suggestions)

After initial contact was made with the participants and suitable times and locations were coordinated, the interview sessions were conducted. During this process, some participants preferred the interview to be conducted non-face-to-face, resulting in 4 interviews being held virtually and 11 interviews conducted in person. The virtual interviews took place online using video conferencing platforms (specifically Google Meet and WhatsApp). The average duration of each interview was approximately 45 minutes. Upon the completion of each interview, the notes taken during the session were carefully reviewed. In cases where ambiguity or lack of clarity

existed in the data, follow-up questions were posed by re-contacting the interviewee to resolve uncertainties. To adhere to ethical considerations, participants were verbally informed of the research objectives and participated voluntarily in the study. Furthermore, participant privacy was protected by removing identifying information from the responses.

During each interview, extensive notes were taken to capture the essence of the responses. Key phrases, themes, and participant expressions were documented to preserve the richness of the data. Data from online interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The collected data underwent preliminary analysis to extract key and meaningful statements. Based on the codes identified from each interview, the framework and questions for subsequent interviews were adjusted and updated, preparing the ground for conducting further interviews. This process continued until the final interview. By identifying commonalities among the initial codes, themes and sub-themes were extracted. From the twelfth interview onwards, no new codes emerged from the data, indicating that theoretical saturation had been reached. To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, regular review sessions were held among the research team members to discuss emerging themes and revise the codes in light of new data.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis and open coding in this research as conducted in a systematic and step-by-step manner. This process included the following stages, explained with examples related to the interviews with faculty members of the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences:

1. **Data Preparation**

In this stage, all interviews with professors were transcribed and converted into written text. For example, if a professor had stated: "*One of the main problems is that students lack sufficient motivation to participate in class,"* this sentence was written down completely and accurately. The textual data, along with field notes and other relevant information, were organized into a database. For instance, all interviews were imported into the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA to facilitate their management and analysis.

2. **Open Coding**

In the open coding stage, the researcher meticulously reviewed the interview texts line by line to identify key concepts, meaningful phrases, and ideas relevant to the research questions.

Codes were selected descriptively and close to the participants' own language to preserve the authenticity of the data. For example, if a professor had said: "Some students study only for grades and pay no attention to deep learning," this statement was coded with a label such as "Student focus on grades."

3. **Grouping Codes and Creating Concepts**

After initial coding, similar or related codes were grouped together to form broader and more comprehensive concepts. For example, codes such as "Monotony of classes," "Lack of use of modern teaching methods," and "Lack of interaction in class" were placed into one group and categorized under the overarching concept of "Challenges in Teaching Methods." These concepts represented the main ideas that were repeated in the data or held particular significance. Each concept was considered a preliminary theme.

4. **Reviewing and Refining Codes and Concepts**

In this stage, the created codes and concepts were re-examined to ensure their accuracy and coherence. For example, if initially the codes "Student focus on grades" and "Lack of interest in deep learning" had been coded separately, they might be merged at this stage under a more general concept like "Student attitudes towards learning." This review helped the researcher ensure that the codes and concepts accurately reflected the data and that no significant portion of the data had been overlooked.

5. **Identifying Main Themes and Sub-Themes**

In the next stage, the created concepts were divided into main themes and sub-themes. For example, the concept "Challenges in Teaching Methods" could become a main theme, while its sub-themes included "Monotony of classes," "Lack of use of modern methods," and "Lack of interaction."

This stage helped the researcher create a coherent and logical structure for data analysis and identify relationships between different concepts. For instance, it might become apparent that "Challenges in Teaching Methods" was related to another theme, such as "The Role of Professors in Motivating Students."

Results

Faculty Perceptions of Deficiencies and Challenges in the University's Teaching-Learning Process

In the section concerning faculty perceptions of deficiencies in the teaching-learning processes, six main themes and 18 subthemes were identified, reflecting their views and experiences of the challenges within the educational system of the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at the Science and Research University. Faculty members pointed to issues such as student motivation and participation, educational infrastructure and facilities, workload and time constraints, university policies and regulations, teaching and assessment methods, and interaction with students. As illustrated in Figure 1, the most frequently cited challenge was "Teaching and Assessment Methods" (23.1%), followed closely by "Student Motivation" and "Policies" (17.9% each). These perceptions indicate that faculty members also feel the current educational system has failed to effectively meet students' learning needs, and improvements in this area are essential. Each of these categories and their related subcategories are explained in detail below.

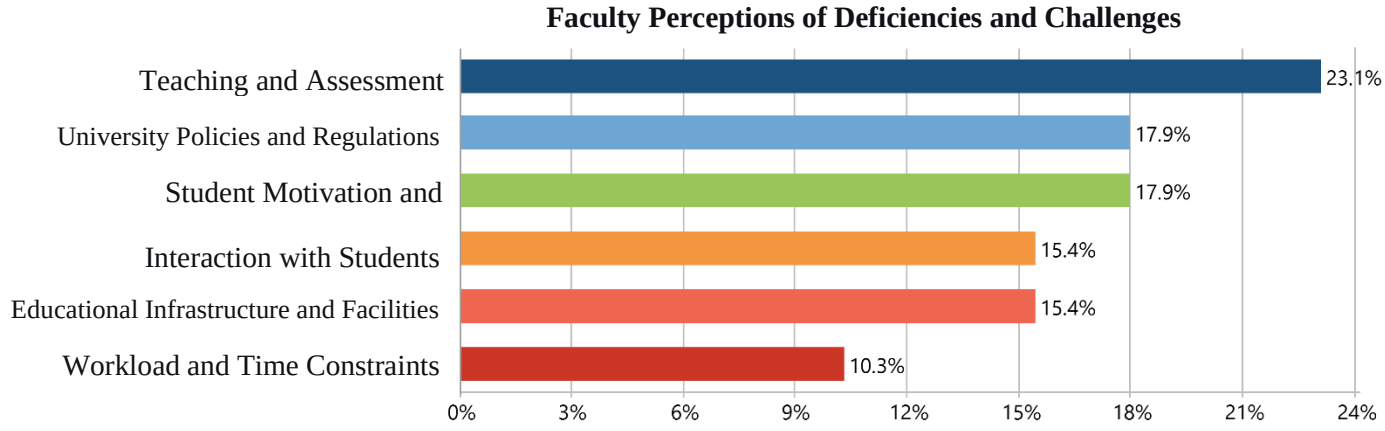

Figure 1. Categories Pertaining to Faculty Perceptions of Challenges in the University Teaching-Learning Process

Student Motivation and Participation

One of the main categories in faculty perceptions of deficiencies in the teaching-learning process is student motivation and participation. Faculty members frequently cited a lack of student motivation and participation in the learning process. They believe this issue leads to a decline in

educational quality and prevents students from fully benefiting from learning opportunities. Faculty perceive that students are more focused on grades than on deep learning, which limits their participation in classes. This category includes three main subcategories, detailed below.

- **Lack of Intrinsic Motivation:** Faculty report that students focus more on grades than on deep learning. They feel this results in students lacking sufficient motivation to engage with the material. Instructors note that students are primarily concerned with obtaining grades and show less interest in learning the material itself.
  - *Narrative 1:* One professor stated: "*Students are more focused on getting grades and show less interest in learning the material. This leads to a decrease in educational quality*."
  - *Narrative 2:* Another professor expressed: "*I feel that students pay more attention to grades and are less interested in deep learning. This prevents them from fully benefiting from learning opportunities.*"
- **Lack of Active Participation in Class:** Faculty indicate that students do not participate actively in classes and tend to be passive listeners. They feel this makes classes monotonous and unengaging. Professors report that students are typically quiet in class and reluctant to participate in discussions.
  - *Narrative 1:* One professor said: *"Students are usually quiet in class and unwilling to participate in discussions. This makes classes boring and unappealing."*
  - *Narrative 2:* Another professor commented: "*I would like students to participate more in class, but unfortunately, most are just listeners and do not wish to participate actively."*
- **Dependence on Instructors:** Faculty feel that students are overly dependent on them and show little inclination towards independent learning. They believe this prevents students from fully utilizing learning opportunities. Instructors note that students expect to be told everything and are unwilling to research and learn independently.
  - *Narrative 1:* One professor stated: *"Students expect us to tell them everything and are not willing to research and learn independently. This prevents them from fully benefiting from learning opportunities."*
  - *Narrative 2:* Another professor noted: *"I feel that students are too dependent on me and lack the desire for independent learning. This hinders them from fully taking advantage of learning opportunities."*

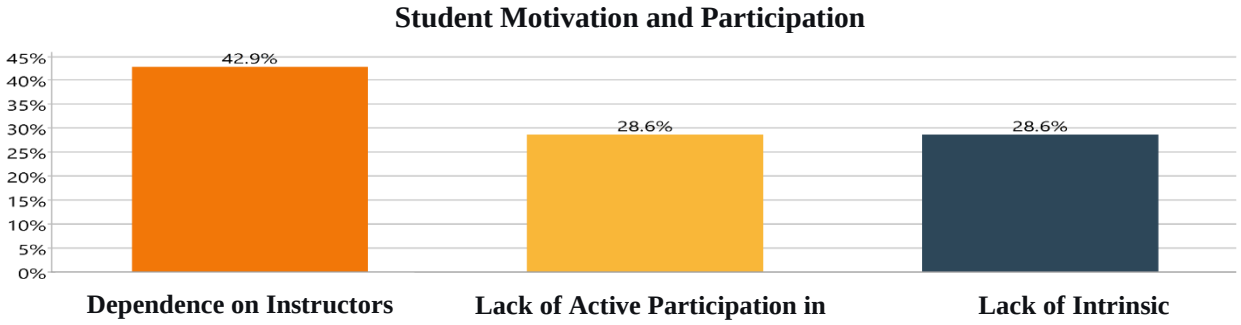

Figure 2. The Category of Student Motivation and Participation and its Related Subcategories

These three subcategories show that faculty are widely dissatisfied with the lack of student motivation and participation and feel that this issue diminishes educational quality. Enhancing student motivation and participation could contribute to increased satisfaction and performance.

Educational Infrastructure and Facilities

Another main category in faculty perceptions of deficiencies is educational infrastructure and facilities. Faculty frequently mentioned a lack of necessary facilities and resources for effective teaching. They feel these shortcomings prevent them from fully utilizing modern educational methods and reduce educational quality. Faculty believe that improving infrastructure and educational facilities could enhance teaching and learning effectiveness. This category comprises three main subcategories, detailed below.

Shortage of Digital Resources: Faculty report limited access to digital and online resources. They feel this prevents them from using up-to-date and diverse materials for teaching. Instructors note that access to e-books, scientific articles, and databases could improve their teaching quality, but these resources are often unavailable.

Narrative 1: One professor said: "I need articles and e-books for teaching, but access to these resources is very limited. This prevents me from fully using modern educational methods."

Narrative 2: Another professor expressed: "If access to digital resources were greater, I could teach the material much better. Unfortunately, these resources are scarce and difficult to access."

Inadequate Library Facilities: Faculty indicate that the faculty libraries lack sufficient and up-to-date resources. They feel this hinders easy access to needed materials. Professors state that

libraries need more frequent updates and should provide more resources for both faculty and students.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I need specific books for my research, but they are not available in the library. This prevents me from conducting research effectively."

Narrative 2: Another professor commented: "I think if the libraries were updated more frequently, we could use resources much better. Unfortunately, most books are outdated, and new resources are very scarce."

Lack of Educational Technology in Classrooms: Faculty feel that classrooms are not equipped with digital tools and educational technology. They believe this results in the teaching process lacking necessary engagement and efficiency. Instructors note that using digital tools like video projectors, smart boards, and educational software could improve their teaching quality, but these tools are often absent from classrooms.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I feel that if classrooms were equipped with digital tools, I could teach the material much better. Unfortunately, most classrooms only have a blackboard and chalk."

Narrative 2: Another professor said: "I believe using educational technology could make classes more engaging and effective. Unfortunately, most classrooms are not equipped with these tools."

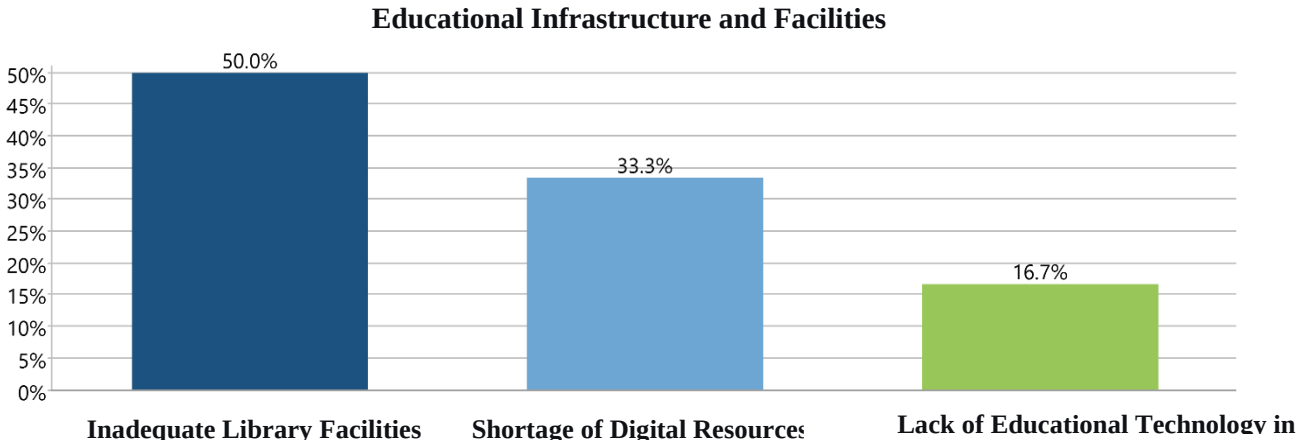

Figure 3. The Category of Educational Infrastructure and Facilities and its Related Subcategories

These three subcategories indicate widespread faculty dissatisfaction with the lack of educational facilities and resources, feeling it prevents full utilization of modern teaching methods. Improving educational infrastructure and facilities could enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Workload and Time Constraints

Another primary category in faculty perceptions of deficiencies is workload and time constraints. Faculty frequently referred to high administrative workloads and a lack of time to focus on improving teaching methods. They feel this prevents them from fully concentrating on educational quality and leaves insufficient time for effective student interaction or course preparation. This category includes three main subcategories, detailed below.

High Volume of Administrative Tasks: Faculty report having numerous administrative duties that consume their time. They feel this prevents them from focusing adequately on improving teaching methods. Instructors note that administrative tasks such as form filling, meeting attendance, and administrative responsibilities take up significant time.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I spend most of my time on administrative tasks and have little time to improve my teaching methods. This prevents me from fully focusing on educational quality."

Narrative 2: Another professor expressed: "Administrative tasks are very time-consuming, and I have little time to focus on teaching. This keeps me from fully using modern educational methods."

Insufficient Time for Student Interaction: Faculty indicate they lack sufficient time for effective interaction with students. They feel this prevents them from fully supporting students' learning opportunities. Professors express a desire to interact more with students but cite a lack of time.

Narrative 1: One professor said: "I would like to interact more with students, but I don't have enough time for it. This prevents me from fully supporting their learning opportunities."

Narrative 2: Another professor noted: "I feel that if I had more time to interact with students, I could help them much better. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time for this."

Time Pressure for Content Preparation: Faculty feel they lack sufficient time to prepare course content. They believe this lowers their teaching quality. Instructors note that class time is limited, preventing them from covering material comprehensively.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I don't have enough time to prepare course content, and this affects my teaching quality. If I had more time, I could teach the material much better."

Narrative 2: Another professor commented: "I feel that class time is too limited, and I cannot teach all the material thoroughly. This leads to a decrease in my teaching quality."

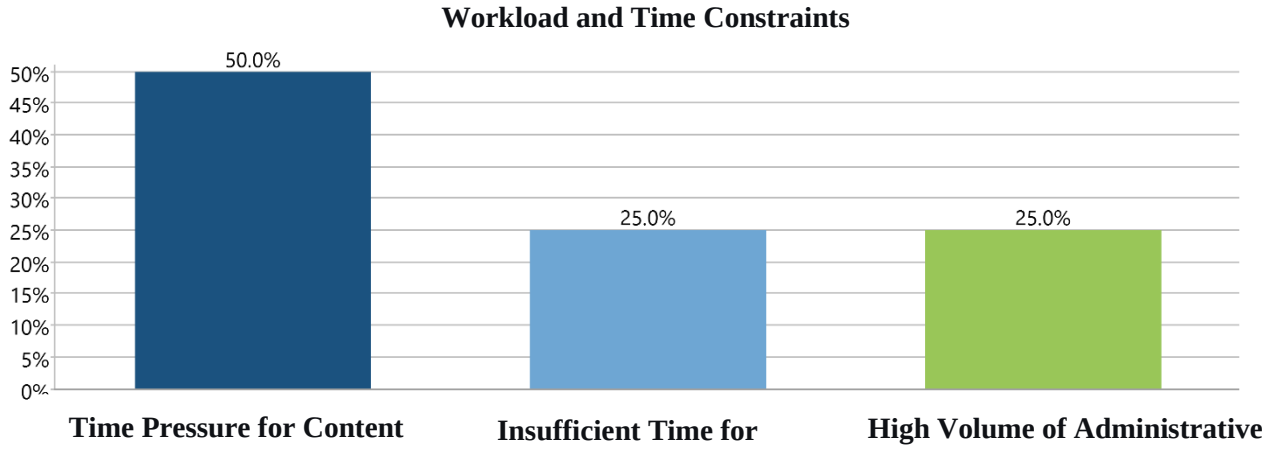

Figure 4. The Category of Workload and Time and its Related Subcategories

These three subcategories reveal widespread faculty dissatisfaction with high administrative workloads and time shortages, feeling it hinders their ability to focus fully on educational quality. Reducing workload and increasing time for student interaction and content preparation could enhance teaching and learning effectiveness.

University Policies and Regulations

Another main category in faculty perceptions is university policies and regulations. Faculty frequently cited limitations imposed by university policies and regulations that hinder the implementation of modern teaching or assessment methods. They feel these restrictions prevent them from fully utilizing effective educational methods and reduce educational quality. This category consists of three main subcategories, detailed below.

Rigid Assessment Regulations: Faculty state that strict regulations regarding exam procedures eliminate the flexibility needed to assess diverse student skills. They feel this prevents them from using varied assessment methods. Instructors express a desire to use modern assessment methods like projects or presentations but state university regulations do not permit this.

Narrative 1: One professor said: "I would like to use diverse assessment methods, but university regulations don't allow it. This prevents me from fully evaluating different student skills."

Narrative 2: Another professor expressed: "University exam regulations are too rigid and remove the necessary flexibility for assessing student skills. This prevents me from using modern assessment methods."

Lack of Support for Educational Initiatives: Faculty indicate that the university does not support their educational initiatives. They feel this prevents them from implementing modern teaching methods. Professor's report having tried to implement innovative teaching methods several times but received no university support.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I have tried several times to implement modern teaching methods, but the university did not support this. It prevents me from fully using effective educational methods."

Narrative 2: Another professor noted: "I feel that if the university supported our educational initiatives, we could implement modern teaching methods much better. Unfortunately, this support is lacking."

Time Constraints for Teaching: Faculty feel that class time is limited and insufficient for comprehensive content delivery. They believe this lowers their teaching quality. Instructors note that class time is inadequate and does not allow them to cover all material thoroughly.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "Class time is very limited, and I cannot teach all the material thoroughly. This leads to a decrease in my teaching quality."

Narrative 2: Another professor said: "I feel that if class time were longer, I could teach the material much better. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time for it."

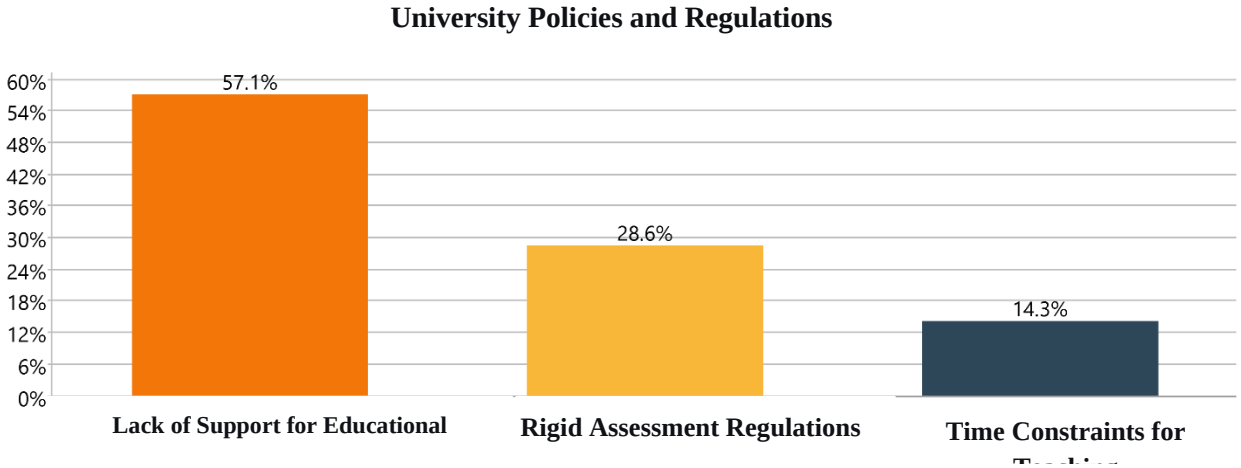

Figure 5. The Category of University Policies and Regulations and its Related Subcategories

These three subcategories show that faculty are widely dissatisfied with limitations stemming from university policies and regulations, feeling they prevent the full use of effective educational methods. Improving university policies and regulations could enhance teaching and learning effectiveness.

Teaching and Assessment Methods

Another primary category in faculty perceptions is teaching and assessment methods. Faculty frequently cited challenges related to current teaching and assessment methods. They feel that existing methods do not fully meet student learning needs and that improvements are necessary. Faculty believe that using modern teaching and assessment methods could increase educational effectiveness. This category includes three main subcategories, detailed below.

Mismatch Between Teaching Methods and Student Needs: Faculty report that their teaching methods are not aligned with student needs. They feel this prevents students from fully benefiting from learning opportunities. Instructors express a desire to improve their teaching methods but lack sufficient time and resources.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I feel my teaching methods don't align with student needs, but I don't know how to improve them. This prevents students from fully benefiting from learning opportunities."

Narrative 2: Another professor expressed: "I would like to improve my teaching methods, but I lack the time and resources. This prevents me from fully using modern educational methods."

Lack of Diversity in Assessment Methods: Faculty indicate that assessment methods lack necessary variety. They feel this prevents a comprehensive evaluation of different student skills. Professors state they would like to use diverse assessment methods but lack the time and resources.

Narrative 1: One professor said: "I would like to use diverse assessment methods, but I don't have enough time and resources. This prevents me from fully evaluating different student skills."

Narrative 2: Another professor noted: "I feel that if I used varied assessment methods, I could evaluate student skills much better. Unfortunately, I lack the time and resources."

Underutilization of Educational Technology: Faculty feel they do not use educational technology sufficiently. They believe this results in the teaching process lacking necessary engagement and efficiency. Instructors express a desire to use digital tools for teaching but note that classrooms are not equipped with them.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I would like to use digital tools for teaching, but the classrooms aren't equipped with them. This prevents me from fully using modern educational methods."

Narrative 2: Another professor commented: "I feel that if classrooms were equipped with digital tools, I could teach the material much better. Unfortunately, most only have a blackboard and chalk."

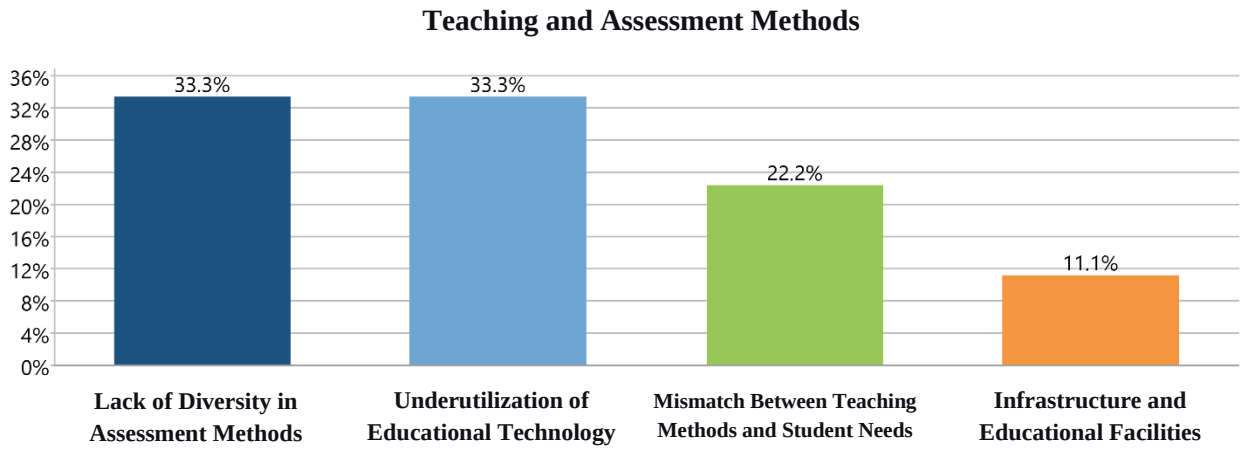

Figure 6. The Category of Teaching and Assessment Methods and its Related Subcategories

These three subcategories indicate widespread faculty dissatisfaction with current teaching and assessment methods, feeling they do not fully meet student learning needs. Improving teaching and assessment methods and integrating educational technology could enhance educational effectiveness.

Interaction with Students

The final main category in faculty perceptions is interaction with students. Faculty frequently cited challenges related to effective interaction with students. They feel this prevents them from fully supporting student learning opportunities. Faculty believe that increasing interaction with students could improve educational quality and learning outcomes. This category comprises three main subcategories, detailed below.

Insufficient Time for Interaction: Faculty report not having enough time for effective interaction with students. They feel this hinders their ability to fully support student learning opportunities. Instructors express a desire to interact more with students but cite time constraints.

Narrative 1: One professor said: "I would like to interact more with students, but I don't have enough time. This prevents me from fully supporting their learning opportunities."

Narrative 2: Another professor expressed: "I feel that if I had more time to interact with students, I could help them much better. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time."

Insufficient Attention to Individual Needs: Faculty indicate they do not pay adequate attention to individual student needs. They feel this causes some students to miss out on learning opportunities. Professors state they would like to focus more on individual needs but lack the time and resources.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I feel I don't pay enough attention to individual student needs, but I lack the time and resources. This causes some students to not fully benefit from learning opportunities."

Narrative 2: Another professor noted: "I would like to pay more attention to individual student needs, but unfortunately, I don't have enough time. This prevents me from fully supporting their learning."

Lack of Constructive Feedback: Faculty feel they do not provide sufficient and constructive feedback to students. They believe this prevents students from identifying and improving their weaknesses. Instructors note they would like to give more feedback but lack the time.

Narrative 1: One professor stated: "I would like to give more feedback to students, but I don't have enough time. This prevents me from fully supporting their learning opportunities."

Narrative 2: Another professor said: "I feel that if I gave more feedback to students, I could help them much better. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time."

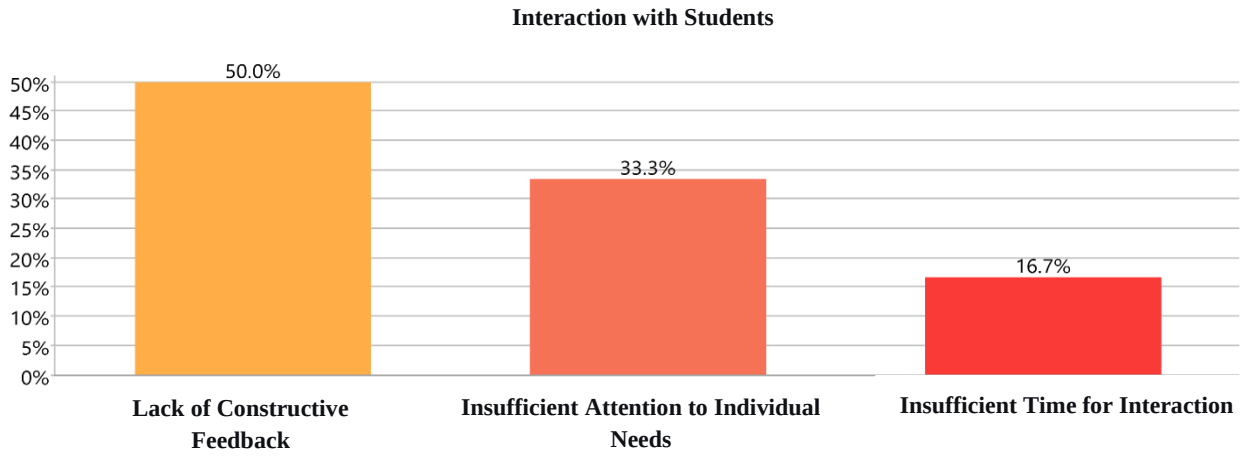

Figure 7. The Category of Interaction with Students and its Related Subcategories

These three subcategories show that faculty are widely dissatisfied with the lack of effective interaction with students, feeling it prevents them from fully supporting learning opportunities.

Increasing interaction and providing constructive feedback could enhance student satisfaction and performance.

In examining the deficiencies of the teaching-learning process, faculty identified multiple challenges that negatively impact educational quality. They consider the lack of student motivation and participation, weak educational infrastructure and facilities, high administrative workload, limitations imposed by university policies and regulations, and the misalignment of teaching and assessment methods with student needs to be among the primary problems. Furthermore, faculty cited a lack of time for effective interaction with students and providing constructive feedback. These perceptions indicate that faculty feel the current educational system has not fully met student learning needs and that improvements in various areas, including teaching methods, assessment, and student interaction, are essential. Enhancing these aspects could contribute to increased educational effectiveness and learning outcomes.

Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the teaching-learning processes within the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, revealing significant insights into faculty perceptions regarding the quality of these processes. By employing a Grounded Theory methodology and engaging with a diverse group of faculties through semi-structured interviews, the present research has identified notable deficiencies across six main categories: Student Motivation and Participation, Educational Infrastructure and Facilities, Workload and Time Constraints, University Policies and Regulations, Teaching and Assessment Methods, and Interaction with Students. These findings underscore the shortcomings within the educational environment and highlight the necessity of understanding faculty experiences to enhance the quality of higher education.

Faculty in this study pointed to a lack of intrinsic motivation and active participation among students in classes. This issue suggests that students may lack sufficient motivation to engage in the learning process for various reasons, including monotonous teaching methods or unengaging educational content. These findings align with recent research by Trolian (2024), who argues that student engagement is multidimensional and significantly impacted by the perceived relevance of the curriculum and the quality of student-faculty interactions. The lack of intrinsic motivation

could stem from a disconnect between the educational content and students' interests and needs. Furthermore, the lack of active student participation may be due to non-interactive teaching methods that fail to provide adequate opportunities for student involvement. These findings align with the study by Ebrahimi et al. (2023), which indicated that passive and traditional teaching methods and models lack the validity to enhance the quality of student learning and their participation in the teaching-learning process.

Student dependence on instructors was another issue raised. This dependence could indicate a lack of student autonomy in learning. Instead of taking responsibility for their own learning, students may expect instructors to transmit all knowledge to them. This issue can lead to a diminished capacity for critical thinking and problem-solving among students. Similarly, Darabi et al. (2021), in line with sustainable pedagogy in the learning process, emphasized the creation and reinforcement of problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and scientific and social knowledge in students.

Faculty highlighted a shortage of digital resources, inadequate library facilities, and a lack of educational technology in classrooms. These findings indicate that the existing educational infrastructure may be insufficient to meet the demands of modern higher education. This is consistent with the findings of Laufer et al. (2021), who note that the digital divide in higher education infrastructure continues to hamper the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies, particularly in post-pandemic contexts. A shortage of digital resources can hinder student access to up-to-date information relevant to their field of study. This is particularly significant in today's world, where digital technologies play a crucial role in education. Inadequate library facilities can also lead to a decline in the quality of student research and learning. Libraries lacking sufficient or current resources cannot adequately meet student needs. Additionally, the lack of educational technology in classrooms can prevent the effective use of modern teaching methods, potentially reducing the appeal and effectiveness of instruction.

Faculty reported a high volume of administrative tasks and a lack of time for interaction with students. This issue suggests that due to excessive workload pressures, faculty may not have sufficient time to focus on teaching and interacting with students. A high administrative workload can significantly drain faculty energy and time, diverting their focus from improving teaching quality. This reflects the broader challenge of "academic burnout" discussed by Qadir (2023),

where administrative burdens detract from pedagogical quality. The lack of time for student interaction was another raised concern. This can hinder the establishment of effective communication between faculty and students. Effective faculty-student interaction is a key factor in academic success, and a lack of time for this interaction can lead to a decrease in the quality of student learning. Furthermore, faculty mentioned time pressure for content preparation, which can result in a decline in the quality of educational materials.

Faculty referred to rigid assessment regulations, a lack of support for educational initiatives, and time constraints for teaching. These findings suggest that university policies and regulations may hinder faculty flexibility in teaching and assessment. Rigid assessment regulations can lead to reduced creativity and initiative in teaching. Faculty may feel compelled to adhere to university rules and regulations rather than focusing on student needs. A lack of support for educational initiatives was another issue raised. This can impede the implementation of innovative teaching and assessment methods. Faculty may have creative ideas for improving the teaching-learning process but be unable to implement them due to a lack of institutional support. As noted by Zaakiyyah (2024), rigid institutional frameworks often stifle educational innovation and limit the potential for human resource development. According to the findings of Mohammadzadeh and Salehi (2015), the higher education system, particularly in content, subject matter, teaching methods, research, and indicators for evaluating the scientific performance of individuals, especially faculty members, operates according to traditional procedures. This has resulted in faculty lacking sufficient vitality and dynamism in the classroom. Additionally, time constraints for teaching can hinder the delivery of high-quality educational content.

Furthermore, faculty pointed to a misalignment between teaching methods and student needs, a lack of diversity in assessment methods, and the underutilization of educational technology. These findings indicate that existing teaching and assessment methods may not effectively address the diverse needs of students. A misalignment between teaching methods and student needs can lead to decreased student participation and motivation. A lack of diversity in assessment methods was another identified issue. This can result in superficial learning, as students may focus on memorization rather than a deep understanding of concepts. In research conducted by Pakzad et al. (2020), they pointed to the gap in evaluating student learning outcomes as a powerful scientific and social tool that illustrates the manner and extent of knowledge and skill transfer, and scientific

experience. Furthermore, the underutilization of educational technology can hinder teaching effectiveness. Educational technologies can help instructors deliver content in a more engaging and interactive manner (Schön et al., 2023).

Faculty highlighted a lack of time for interaction with students, insufficient attention to individual needs, and a shortage of constructive feedback. These findings suggest that effective interaction between faculty and students may be diminished due to time constraints and educational resources. A lack of time for interaction with students can prevent the clarification of student ambiguities and questions. Insufficient attention to individual student needs was another raised issue. This can lead to reduced participation and success among students. Each student has individual needs in the learning process, and neglecting these needs can result in lower learning quality. Similarly, a lack of constructive feedback can hinder student progress. Timely and constructive feedback can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and facilitate improvement.

The findings of this study demonstrate that faculty in the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at the Science and Research University face multiple challenges in the teaching-learning processes. These challenges include a lack of student motivation and participation, weak educational infrastructure and facilities, excessive workload and time constraints, rigid policies and regulations, inefficient teaching and assessment methods, and a lack of effective interaction with students. To improve the quality of education in this faculty, it is necessary to implement changes in teaching practices, upgrading educational facilities, reducing faculty workload, reforming university policies and regulations, and increasing faculty-student interaction (Trolian, 2024). These changes can not only enhance the student learning experience but also contribute to increasing the quality of higher education in this institution (Qadir, 2023).

Practical Implications of the Research

1. Review of Teaching Methods and Content: Instructors and curriculum developers should utilize diverse educational approaches, including active learning and technology-enhanced instruction. Simultaneously, curriculum planning authorities must continuously update course content, ensuring its relevance to labor market needs and recent developments in the field. 2. Enhancing Interaction and Support: Educational institutions should facilitate interaction between students and faculty by establishing mentoring programs, regular feedback sessions, and accessible office hours. This should be complemented by fostering a culture of continuous learning through skills

workshops and advisory programs. 3. Improving Facilities and Resources: Universities should invest in modern educational resources and infrastructure, including up-to-date technologies, study spaces, and library resources. Equipping classrooms with the necessary tools is essential for creating a productive educational atmosphere. 4. Revision of Assessment Methods: Assessment methods should be diversified to include project-based evaluations, presentations, and peer assessments that focus on practical skills and critical thinking. 5. Reduction of Faculty Workload: University administrators can assist faculty by reducing the volume of administrative tasks and increasing allocated class preparation time, allowing them to dedicate more time to teaching and interacting with students. 6. Formulation of Supportive Policies and Initiatives: University leadership and higher education organizations should actively support faculty initiatives by formulating policies that include funding for educational projects, awarding outstanding faculty and students, and creating opportunities for international collaboration.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

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