

***IMPACT OF STRUCTURED ORAL EXAMINATION ON STUDENTS' LEARNING: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN FACULTY OF MEDICINE UNIVERSITAS JENDERAL SOEDIRMAN***

**DAMPAK UJIAN LISAN TERSTRUKTUR TERHADAP PROSES BELAJAR MAHASISWA: PENELITIAN KUALITATIF DI FAKULTAS KEDOKTERAN UNIVERSITAS JENDERAL SOEDIRMAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The oral examination is one of the traditional assessment methods which is considered to have low validity and reliability. However, several medical schools in Indonesia use structured oral examination as a part of the assessment systems, such as faculty of medicine Universitas Jenderal Soedirman. Structured oral examination is expected to have positive impact on student learning motivation. This research was conducted to explore students' perception on the impact of structured oral examination on their learning. The research was a qualitative research with phenomenology approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 5 students who were selected based on different gender and year of study. The results of this research indicated that students were motivated to learn better for structured oral examination since they had to face the examiner directly, they should understand the learning material in order to be able to do the examination and they must present the answers in a structured manner so that the examiner understood them. The issue of subjectivity became one of the triggers for students to study better. The methods used by students in preparing for structured oral examination were attending lectures and group discussions well, studying in groups and using audiovisual media to increase understanding. The negative impact of structured oral examination was the anxiety that arouse when students were about to take the examination. The large number of possible materials to be tested caused students to lose their focus on learning. Students realized that they should have good preparation to take the structured oral examination. Based on the results, it could be concluded that structured oral examination had a more positive impact than negative impact on student learning process.*

**Keywords:** *learning impact, medical education, oral examination, structured oral examination*

**ABSTRAK**

Ujian lisan merupakan salah satu metode penilaian tradisional yang dinilai memiliki validitas dan reliabilitas yang rendah. Meskipun demikian, beberapa fakutas kedokteran di Indonesia masih menggunakan ujian lisan terstruktur sebagai salah satu komponen penilaian termasuk fakultas kedokteran Universitas Jenderal Soedirman. Ujian lisan terstruktur diharapkan memberikan dampak positif terhadap motivasi belajar mahasiswa. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa mengenai dampak ujian lisan terstuktur terhadap belajarnya. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Wawancara mendalam dilakukan terhadap 5

mahasiswa yang dipilih dengan variasi gender dan tingkat angkatan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa termotivasi belajar lebih baik dalam menghadapi ujian lisan terstruktur karena mahasiswa harus menghadapi pengujian secara langsung, mahasiswa benar-benar harus memahami materi belajar agar dapat mengerjakan ujian dan mahasiswa harus dapat menyampaikan jawaban secara terstruktur agar dipahami oleh pengujian. Isu mengenai subjektivitas justru menjadi salah satu pemicu mahasiswa untuk belajar lebih baik. Metode yang digunakan mahasiswa dalam mempersiapkan ujian lisan terstruktur adalah mengikuti perkuliahan dan diskusi kelompok dengan baik, belajar bersama teman serta menggunakan media audiovisual untuk meningkatkan pemahaman. Dampak negatif dari ujian lisan terstruktur adalah kecemasan yang muncul ketika akan mengikuti ujian. Banyaknya kemungkinan materi yang akan diujikan mengakibatkan mahasiswa kehilangan fokus belajar. Mahasiswa menyadari bahwa mereka harus mempersiapkan diri dengan baik agar dapat mengikuti ujian lisan terstruktur dengan baik. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut dapat disimpulkan bahwa ujian lisan terstruktur memiliki dampak positif yang lebih banyak dibandingkan dengan dampak negatif terhadap proses belajar mahasiswa.

**Kata kunci:** dampak belajar, pendidikan kedokteran, ujian lisan, ujian lisan terstruktur

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## INTRODUCTION

Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman applies various methods to assess students' learning outcome, including oral, written and practical examinations. The oral examinations carried out in the pre-clinical stage are structured oral examination and the modification or the so called Structured Oral Case Analysis (SOCA). SOCA aims to assess students' abilities to apply clinical reasoning skills in exploring and solving the medical case. Students are assigned to analyze the case comprehensively and answer the questions as a form of academic communication.

Oral examination is one of traditional assessment methods which tends to be abandoned since it is considered to have lower validity and reliability than the other methods. Furthermore, it is regarded as the most stressful examination for students, so it is very likely to affect students' performance. However, several medical schools in Indonesia still use oral examination as a part of the assessment systems since it is expected to have positive impact on students' learning. One of efforts to increase the validity and reliability of oral examination is to create standardized scoring rubric to minimize subjectivity and bias in the process of assessment (Lisiswanti 2014; Pernar 2020; Stujana 2021). So, it becomes more structured than the traditional one.

Structured oral examination indeed has several advantages opposed to written examination. Characteristic of the structured oral examination allows teacher to probe the depth and the width of students' knowledge, so students can have active interaction with the teacher. This situation can help students to improve their engagement with the course material and also the learning process. So, structured oral examination tends to increase motivation and promote deep learning, critical thinking and creative expression (Delson et al 2022; Utami 2021).

Students are the most important part of the discussion about the structured oral examinations. They are the party most affected by the advantages and disadvantages of the examinations. Therefore, their perception of the examinations should become a concern for the medical faculty. This research

was conducted to explore students' perception on the impact of structured oral examination on their learning. Research focused on structured oral examination has been widely published in the world. However, students' perception on in this matter are rarely explored especially in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

We used a qualitative research design with phenomenology approach to explore students' perception about the impact of structured oral examinations (including SOCA) administered by the faculty of medicine Universitas Jenderal Soedirman on their learning. We did not use any predetermined theory, but aimed rather to discuss the experiences and perceptions of the participants. We conducted in-depth interview technique with purposive sampling. The participants were selected with specific criteria. The participants should be undergraduate students who had taken at least 4 times structured oral examinations so they had had good understanding about the examinations.

Semi-structured interview guide with 4 open questions was developed in this research. The questions were: 1) what do you know about structured oral examination; 2) what is the difference between structured oral examination with any other examination; 3) How does the structured oral examination influence your learning; 4) How do you prepare to face the structured oral examination. The interview guide allows the possibilities of dynamic probing questions tailored to the needs of exploring students' perception about the impact of structured oral examinations.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was conducted in February 2018. We made a list of potential students to become the participants with various gender and year of study. We contacted the participant through text message to deliver short explanation about the research and made an appointment to meet face to face.

The interviews were done at the time and place determined by the participants. Each interview was recorded by electronic voice recorder which completed with field notes. The interviews in this research lasted 15 – 47 minutes. The process of recruiting participants continued to be carried out simultaneously with the interview until data saturation was reached (Harper & Thompson 2012). After conducting 4 interviews, we found no new information from the participants. We tried to add one more students to ensure the data saturation.

### **Data Analysis**

The first step of data analysis was to develop transcript verbatim. After each interview, we transcribed the interview recording manually completed with the details from field notes such as expression, gesture and conversation atmosphere. We checked each transcript line by line to ensure the congruence between the transcript and the recording. The checked transcript were sent to the participants for confirmation and feedback.

All the transcript were read several times to gain a general understanding of all information. Each transcript was coded by two coders separately then compared and discussed altogether to reach an agreement or the so called inter coder-agreement (Cresswel 2009). Thematic analysis was conducted to find the sub-categories and categories related to the impact of structured oral examination on students' learning. Codes, sub-categories and categories were grouped manually using tables. Categories were checked and discussed against each other and with the data in the transcript to find the final consensus.

### **Research ethics**

This research was exempted from ethical review by the Health Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman under the file number 2055/UN23.07.5.1/PP.1/2018. The background, aim and the process of the research were explained directly to the

participants. The written informed consent was obtained before participants join the research. We also explained that all data were kept anonymous to keep the privacy and confidentiality.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There were 5 participants with various gender and year of study in this research. There were 2 males and 3 females from grade 2, 3 and 4. Tabel 1 shows the characteristic of the participants.

Tabel I. Characteristic of the participants

| Participants | Gender | Age   | Year of Study |
|--------------|--------|-------|---------------|
| A            | Male   | 20 yo | 4             |
| B            | Female | 20 yo | 3             |
| C            | Male   | 20 yo | 2             |
| D            | Female | 21 yo | 4             |
| E            | Female | 19 yo | 2             |

### Perception about the learning impact of structured oral examinations

In general, participants had the similar perception about structured oral exams. Based on their experience in taking the exams, participants understood that structured oral examination aimed to assess students' understanding of a learning material. This perception was in accordance with several studies which state that oral exams could effectively assess students' understanding and clinical applications in practice. This exam can explore the strengths and weaknesses of students' cognitive domains (Caldwell et al. 202; Febriza & Fitria 2022)

"...In my opinion, to find out how far students understand the material. When they can explain the answer, it means they have already understand"(B)

"...(the goal-red) is to analyze the case. So, we analyze and then answer the question. The aim is indeed to see whether each students understand the learning material" (C)

Not only assessing cognitive abilities, participants knew that the structured oral examination assessed students' communication skills in conveying information in the form of academic communication. Students with high cognitive abilities were not always able to deliver information in a structured, systematic and easily understood by others. Oral examination are appropriate to evaluate clinical competencies including knowledge, critical thinking and communication skills (Roberts et al. 2000).

"...oral exams are different. We need ability to explain information. Sometimes we know the concept, but it seems we know nothing if we can't explain it in the proper way" (E)

Participants considered the structured oral examination as an assessment methods that could force students to study hard. There were several reason, as follow:

- 1) Students must present certain learning material face to face with the examiner. They did not have opportunity to avoid direct interaction with their examiners. This situation became one of the advantages of the oral examination. Oral examination allowed students to have personal direct contact with the faculty (Davis & Karunathilake 2005). Some students would feel embarrassed if they failed to carry out the examination well. Some students even felt guilty for disappointing their examiners.

"MCQ, we are only dealing with computers. In the oral exam (we deal-red) with the examiner. So the oral exam can really assess (our competency). If the student can't do the exam, it becomes really obvious." (D)

"It makes me scare. I fell shame if I can't answer the questions. Furthermore, if the examiner's face looks disappointed, I feel so guilty."(C)

- 2) Students must provide answers from their own thoughts and could not rely on luck as in the multiple choice questions. Participants realized that they should be well prepared if they wanted

to be successful in doing the structured oral examination. They could not guess nor made up the answer randomly since the examiner would know and give a certain reaction.

“To be honest, I don't know how to study for the oral exam because we can't predict what the questions will be. So I learn all the mater.” (A)

“We can't just give a haphazard answer. When it's haphazard, then the result is haphazard” (D)

- 3) Structured oral examination was considered as the most subjective exam related to the various characteristics of the examiners. Some of the examiner might be known as a stingy or otherwise generous in the scoring process. Oral examination had been abandoned regarding poor validity and reliability related to rate bias and lack of standardization (Davis & Karunathilake 2005; Lisiswanti 2014; Wu 2022). Interestingly, this situation also encouraged students to study hard. They could not predict who would assessed them, so they would do their best to be well prepared for the worst scenario.

“I really concern about the subjectivity. I experience it by myself. Characteristic of the examiner has high contribution to our score. When I can't do the exam and I think my score will be low....but my score....it should lower than my factual score.” (A)

Those reasons had a positive impact on students' learning. Even so, those reasons strengthened the negative impact for students at the same time. Participants considered that structured oral examination could make them anxious. In order to be successful in structured oral examination, students should master all the learning outcomes. In the other hands, there were a lot of learning material that must be learned while learning time was limited and they could not choose only certain material to learn.

“I feel anxious, what case can it be, who is the examiner .... When I read the case scenario, I don't know why I am so nervous and my hands is shaking while writing” (E)

“If I found the case scenario is different from what is being studied, then I become panic.... What's in the brain is out of sync with my talk” (B)

### **Students' learning activities in facing structured oral examination**

All participants realized that in order to obtain optimal results in the structured oral examination, they should have good preparation. Each participant had their own way to learn such as: 1) attending lectures and group discussions in a serious manner to learn and then understand the learning material; 2) using audiovisual media to increase understanding; and 3) asking smart students or initiating study group to help them studying.

Participants believed that problem based learning (PBL) sessions were important to strengthen understanding and to train the clinical reasoning process while lectures were important to grasp the basic concept. They took notes and also develop mind or concept map as one of learning tool. To become successful in the structured oral examination, they thought they should utilize all the learning sessions to gain optimal knowledge and skills.

“I usually make a summary (notes-red) and the benchmark is PBL”(D)

“I do everything for oral exam...lectures and PBL, I learn from all of the session”(A)

Audiovisual media became one of favorable learning methods. Besides being interesting, it stimulated the function of the visual and auditory sensory systems. Learning processes that involved multiple senses were believed to increase retention and facilitate the process of understanding. This finding is the same with the previous study. Most students satisfied with the video modules in terms of effectiveness, knowledge retention, convenience, result orientation, and time management (Alomar 2022)

“For oral exams, I usually learn from youtube, see pictures and listen to the explanations. So it's like easy to have clear picture (understanding-red) in my mind” (C)

Some of the participants would like to learn from peer who considered smarter than him/her. Learning from peer in groups helped students to save time, improve self-confidence and optimize

learning ability. They could share information and also discuss learning material to develop knowledge.

“I usually study together with friends ...no matter how much, if I study alone it's definitely not enough.” (E)

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, structured oral examinations have positive and negative impacts on student learning. The structured oral examinations encourage students to study hard. Otherwise, they can also bring negative impacts such as anxiety which can affect student learning focus. Therefore, structured oral examination is worthy to be used as part of the assessment system by minimizing the negative impacts.

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