

## A Pathological Study of the Existing Issues in the Teaching-Learning Process of Humanities Students at Islamic Azad University (Science and Research Branch) from the Perspective of Students

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The teaching-learning process is a complex interplay of pedagogical methods, educational content, and institutional resources, necessitating a thorough examination of students' perspectives to identify deficiencies and inform effective improvements in higher education settings.

**Methods:** The present study employed grounded theory methodology at the conceptual organization level to examine the issues involved in the teaching-learning process at the College of Humanities in Islamic Azad University (Science & Research Branch) from the perspective of students. A purposive sampling method was utilized by conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 students (5 males and 10 females).

**Results:** Based on the thematic analyses of the collected data, a set of themes emerged regarding the students' perceptions of deficiencies in the teaching-learning processes, encompassing five main categories and 16 subcategories. The identified themes revealed students' viewpoints and experiences regarding challenges in teaching methods, educational content, interaction with faculty, facilities and resources, and assessment methods.

**Conclusions:** In summary, the study identified significant deficiencies in the teaching-learning processes suggesting that targeted improvements in teaching methods, resource allocation, and interaction could enhance educational effectiveness and student engagement.

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## Introduction

Higher education is a key driver of innovation and development for any country. Its quality and efficiency significantly contribute to maintaining standards in the teaching-learning process (Ebrahimi et al., 2023; Ghorbani et al., 2023). In developed countries, we witness continuous changes in educational programs. The rapid and major changes occurring in the global society have compelled higher education systems to address both individual needs and global issues, thereby training skilled professionals capable of keeping pace with contemporary society. One fundamental shift in this regard is the adoption of diverse and active methods in the teaching-learning process. The teaching-learning process has become a substantial part of human life; nowadays, information that is accessible and engaging must be applicable, allowing students to utilize their skills in everyday life. Universities are regarded as a major instrument for national development because, on one hand, they are the cornerstone of human resource development, and on the other hand, they are the mechanisms for advancing science and technology (Stensaker, 2017).

The contemporary higher education system fulfills three primary functions: education, research, and service delivery. Education plays a vital role in cultivating skilled and specialized human resources within the higher education system (Zaakyyah et al., 2024). The progress and advancement of human societies rely on providing skilled and specialized human resources to effectively manage various sectors. The teaching-learning process is considered the core of universities; however, due to the complexity of the mission, goals, and responsibilities of universities, the concept of quality in teaching and learning has evolved into a multifaceted and intricate notion. The learning process is one that enhances the capacity and ability to reconstruct ideas, engage in dialogue, propose various solutions to problems, and select the appropriate solution for learners (Darabi et al., 2022).

Pathology of the Teaching-Learning Process refers to the identification of problems and issues arising from various cultural, social, economic, political, historical, and institutional conditions within a country, which confront the teaching-learning processes of its individuals with challenges and difficulties. A higher education system is recognized as having quality when it is devoid of any shortcomings, as such deficiencies are tantamount to the flaws and defects of that system, preventing it from yielding optimal outcomes as outputs or results. Despite the shortcomings and

limitations in the educational processes and programs implemented at any educational institution, examining the effective factors in teaching and learning that impact the quality of education and instruction is considered a significant and sensitive issue that necessitates thorough research and investigation (Khadivi et al., 2018). The cultivation of a teaching-learning culture is a shared responsibility among faculty members and even students (Conzemius, & O'Neill, 2001). Therefore, it is essential to create changes in the quality of the teaching-learning process and in the teaching methods of faculty members in higher education to achieve this objective. Faculty members play a crucial role in achieving the primary goals of higher education (Janssen et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, we currently observe that only a small number of deserving students become successful individuals, emphasizing the shortcomings of our educational system and academic curriculum. Consequently, there is a pressing need to address the existing gaps in the teaching-learning process. The failure to connect curriculum completion with the effective and equivalent transfer of knowledge, along with the incomplete similarity between information transfer and knowledge dissemination, constitutes key gaps in the teaching-learning process (Cheng, 2021; Craig, 2006). This study investigates the characteristics and dimensions of the experiences of faculty members and students in the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences at Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, concerning the teaching-learning process as a fundamental issue. What has not yet been addressed in this area are the existing deficiencies and issues, potential challenges, an overview of the current situation, and ultimately strategies to counter these challenges and issues, which this study represents as a preliminary step in identifying and elucidating some of these measures. In this research, we aim to identify the existing shortcomings in the teaching-learning process within the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Science and Research and to propose solutions for its improvement, thereby addressing these deficiencies and paving the way to enhance the quality of the teaching process in universities. Previous research has also identified some influential factors such as the lack of professional knowledge regarding curriculum design and the relevant knowledge in the specialized and psychological domains of faculty members (Ababaf, 2016), as well as the professional shortcomings of some faculty and the non-specialized nature of the courses offered to them leading to a decline in the quality of educational activities (Kaveh et al., 2023).

In the higher education system of Iran, the emphasis during the evaluation and promotion of faculty is placed more on research than on the quality of teaching. This indicates a diminished importance of the teaching-learning process, leading faculty to spend more of their time on research. However, by identifying the different learning styles of students and becoming familiar with various active and modern teaching models, such as discourse teaching, collaborative teaching, brainstorming methods, constructivist learning, and others, strides can be made toward improving the quality of the teaching-learning process in higher education. Today, many students express dissatisfaction with the quality of the higher education system; they cite the outdated knowledge of their instructors in teaching, their lack of familiarity with educational technology and its application, a lack of professional conscience and diligence from instructors, and also state that instructors do not seem to feel a greater commitment to the quality of teaching and familiarity with modern teaching methods (Fathi Azar, 2020; Kalam & Hossain, 2023; Seyfried & Ansmann, 2018).

Generally, in the teaching-learning process of humanities students, various challenges and issues exist that can significantly impact the quality of education and learning. These issues include weaknesses in teaching methods, inadequacy of educational content, lack of effective interaction between faculty and students, and insufficient access to appropriate educational resources and facilities (Khadivi et al., 2018; Munna & Kalam, 2021). Additionally, differing perspectives from faculty members and students regarding these issues can enhance the understanding of the existing challenges. Identifying and analyzing these shortcomings is crucial to propose solutions for improving the current situation. In this context, the primary aim of the present study is to investigate the existing deficiencies in the teaching-learning process of humanities students at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch. This research examines the views and experiences students as key stakeholders in the teaching-learning process, identifying weaknesses in the educational process and evaluating current teaching methods. More specifically, the study intends to answer the following research question: What perceptions do students hold regarding the shortcomings of the existing teaching-learning processes at the Faculty of Humanities in Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch?

## Material and Methods

### Deign of the Study

The present study, as part of a larger research project, aimed to identify the challenges within the teaching-learning process based on the insights of students. To achieve this, a grounded theory approach was employed at the conceptual organization level. More specifically, in order to inspect the participants' views on the challenges of implementing the teaching-learning process, the semi-structured interview method was employed.

### Setting and Participants

The research field encompassed all students enrolled at Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch, specifically within the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences, during the academic year 2021-2022. A total of 15 interviews were conducted with students selected through purposive sampling. The participants were 15 Iranian students (5 males and 10 females) with an average age of 23 years. All the students were enrolled in undergraduate programs in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Science and Research.

### Procedures of Data Collection

The data collection process began with the design and formulation of the interview protocol. For this purpose, initially the key areas the researchers intended to investigate such as student experiences, challenges in the learning process, and the effectiveness of teaching methods were identified and the broad themes that the questions cover were determined. Subsequently, some open-ended and possible follow-up questions were formulated:

1. How would you describe your overall experience with the teaching atmosphere and methods used in your courses?
2. Have you experienced any challenges in the teaching-learning process? If so, could you elaborate on those?
3. What resources (e.g., textbooks, online materials, libraries) do you find most helpful in your studies?
4. Do you feel that you receive adequate support from faculty and the administration? Why or why not?

5. If you could change one thing about the teaching-learning process in your department, what would it be?

After establishing initial contact with the participants and coordinating appropriate times and locations, the interview sessions were conducted. During this process, some participants preferred to conduct the interviews remotely, resulting in a total of 5 remote interviews and 10 in-person interviews. The remote interviews were conducted in virtual spaces using online communication tools. The average duration of each interview was approximately 45 minutes. After completing each interview, the notes taken during the session were carefully reviewed, and in cases where there was ambiguity or lack of clarity in the data, follow-up questions were posed to the interviewee via additional contact to resolve any uncertainties. In order to ensure ethical considerations, the participants were orally informed about the objectives of the study and voluntarily participated in the study. We also ensured that participants' privacy was protected by anonymizing their responses.

During each interview, extensive notes were taken to capture the essence of the responses. Key phrases, themes, and participant expressions were documented to maintain richness in the data. The data collected from online interviews were recorded and transcribed. The collected data underwent preliminary analysis to extract key and meaningful statements. Based on the identified codes from each interview, the framework and questions for subsequent interviews were adjusted and updated, and the necessary arrangements were made for conducting the next interviews. This process continued until the final interview, during which themes and subthemes were extracted by identifying commonalities among the initial codes. From the 12 interviews onward, no new codes were observed in the data, indicating that data saturation had been reached. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, regular reflection sessions were held among the research team to discuss emerging themes and revisit codes as new data was analyzed.

### **Procedures of Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis and open coding in this study, centered on the theme of "pathology of the teaching-learning process at the University of Science and Research and proposing strategies for its improvement," was conducted systematically and step by step. This process is outlined below, illustrated with examples related to the interviews conducted with students from the Faculty of Humanities:

### 1. Data Preparation

In this phase, all interviews with professors and students were transcribed and converted into written text. For example, if a student stated, "*One of the main issues is that students lack sufficient motivation to participate in class,*" this statement was recorded verbatim. The textual data, along with field notes and other relevant information, were organized into a database. All interviews were entered into the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA to facilitate management and analysis.

### 2. Open Coding

During the open coding phase, the researcher meticulously examined the transcripts line by line to identify key concepts, meaningful phrases, and ideas associated with the research questions. For example, if a student remarked, "*The classes are very uninteresting and monotonous, which makes us lose interest in the subject,*" this statement was marked with a code such as "***monotony of classes***." Codes were selected in a descriptive manner, closely reflecting the language used by participants to preserve the authenticity of the data. For example, if a professor remarked, "*Some students only study for grades and do not pay attention to deep learning,*" this statement was coded as "***students' focus on grades***."

### 3. Grouping Codes and Developing Concepts

After the initial coding, similar or related codes were grouped together to form broader, more comprehensive concepts. For instance, codes such as "monotony of classes," "lack of modern teaching methods," and "insufficient interaction in class" were grouped 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 regarded as a primary theme.

### 4. Reviewing and Refining Codes and Concepts

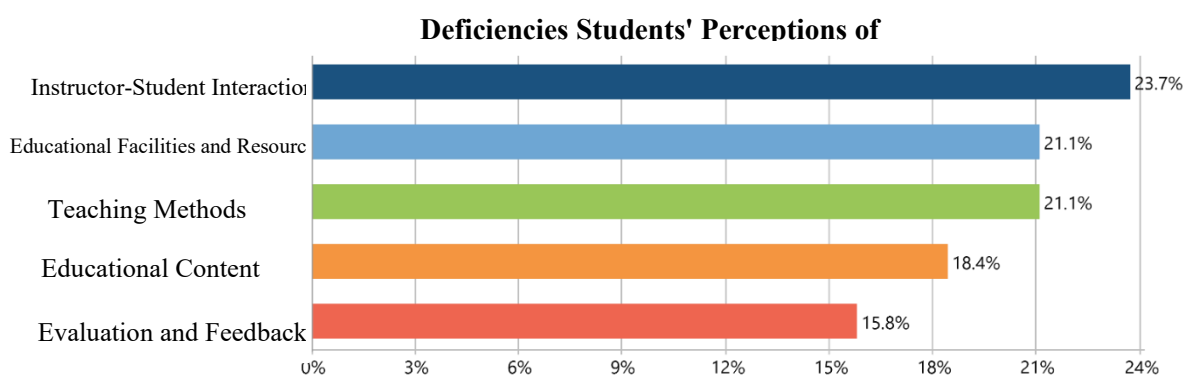
In this stage, the created codes and concepts were reevaluated to ensure their accuracy and coherence. For example, if the codes "students' focus on grades" and "lack of interest in deep learning" had initially been coded separately, they might have been merged at this stage under a broader concept such as "***students' attitudes towards learning***." This review process helped the researcher ensure that the codes and concepts accurately reflected the data and that no significant portions of the data were overlooked.

### 5. Identifying Main Themes and Subthemes

In the following stage, the created concepts were divided into main themes and subthemes. For example, the concept of "challenges in teaching methods" could evolve into a main theme, while its subthemes might include "monotony of classes," "lack of modern methods," and "insufficient interaction." This phase enabled the researcher to establish a coherent and logical structure for data analysis and to identify the relationships among various concepts. For instance, it may have become apparent that "challenges in teaching methods" was related to another theme such as "the role of instructors in motivating students."

### Results

In the students' perceptions of the deficiencies in the teaching-learning processes, five main categories and 16 subcategories were identified, reflecting their views and experiences regarding the challenges within the educational system of the Faculty of Humanities at the Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch (see Table 1 and Figure1). Students reported issues related to the *monotony and unappealing nature of teaching methods, the theoretical focus and lack of updating in educational content, insufficient effective interaction with professors, inadequacies in facilities and educational resources, and an emphasis on memorization in assessment methods.*



**Figure 1.** Categories Related to Students' Perceptions of Deficiencies in the Teaching-Learning Process at the University



The students indicated that teaching approaches are often outdated and unengaging, that course content does not align with the real needs of the job market, and that access to professors and educational resources is limited. Furthermore, the assessment methods are primarily focused on content retention rather than measuring analytical and practical skills. These perceptions suggest that students feel the current educational system has failed to effectively meet their learning needs, indicating that improvements in this area are essential.

**Table 1.** Students' Perceptions of the Deficiencies in the Teaching-Learning Process

Selected Comments	Initial codes	Subthemes	Theme
University classes are very tedious. Instructors merely read from slides and never ask us questions or initiate discussions. I feel like I am just memorizing material without actually learning anything. Sometimes, due to the monotony of the class, my attention wanders, and I cannot concentrate. I wish they would employ more engaging methods, such as videos or group work, to make the classes more dynamic.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traditional, lecture-centered instruction</li> <li>2. Lack of use of interactive tools</li> <li>3. Student fatigue and lack of engagement</li> <li>4. Instructors' focus on content delivery without student participation</li> <li>5. Absence of diversity in content presentation methods</li> </ol>	Monotony and lack of engagement	Teaching Methods
I expected to see the use of new teaching methods at the university; however, everything is unfortunately very traditional. For instance, in programming courses, the instructor simply writes theories on the board and never utilizes educational software or practical projects. Some instructors are even unfamiliar with digital tools and do not know how to incorporate them in class. This situation makes learning very difficult and unappealing for us.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Non-utilization of educational technologies</li> <li>2. Lack of interactive or project-based classes</li> <li>3. Instructors' unfamiliarity with modern teaching methods</li> <li>4. Absence of online learning platforms</li> <li>5. Failure to use digital tools in teaching</li> </ol>	Insufficient use of innovative methods	
As a visual learner, I retain information better when I see it presented with images or diagrams. However, in university classes, instructors only read from text and never use visuals or videos. Even some of my	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Neglect of individual differences</li> <li>2. Uniform teaching approach for all students</li> </ol>	Mismatch with learning styles	

classmates, who have a hands-on learning style, often complain that they have no opportunities for practical work. In my opinion, if instructors would pay attention to our differences and diversify their teaching methods, learning would be easier for everyone.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Overlooking visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles</li> <li>4. Failure to present content in diverse ways</li> <li>5. Lack of opportunities for hands-on or experiential learning</li> </ol>		
In university classes, we often only read theories and practical or applicable examples are never presented. For instance, in management courses, we learn only old theories without any guidance on how to apply them in the real world. This leads me to feel that what I am learning has no practical application and that I am merely memorizing content for exams.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Excessive focus on theoretical concepts</li> <li>2. Absence of practical and applicable examples</li> <li>3. Disconnect between content and real-world needs</li> <li>4. Instruction solely based on textbooks</li> <li>5. Lack of practical projects or case studies</li> </ol>	Theoretical orientation of course content	Educational Content
Some instructors use slides that have not been updated for years. Even some of the books they recommend are from decades ago. This makes me feel that what I am learning has no relevance to the modern world. For example, in computer courses, we still use textbooks that pertain to outdated technologies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use of outdated resources</li> <li>2. Misalignment of content with recent developments</li> <li>3. Lack of current and relevant materials</li> <li>4. Reliance on old slides and handouts</li> <li>5. Failure to incorporate recent research and articles</li> </ol>	Content currency (being outdated)	
I feel that what I learn at university will never be useful in the job market. For instance, in technical courses, we only study theories and never acquire the practical skills needed in the industry. Even internship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Absence of training in practical skills</li> <li>2. Misalignment of content with industry needs</li> </ol>	Irrelevance to job market	

opportunities are quite limited and often unrelated to our field of study.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Lack of internship programs or practical projects</li> <li>4. Failure to introduce market-required skills</li> <li>5. Lack of collaboration with industry for content design</li> </ol>		
In university classes, instructors simply present the material without allocating enough time to address our questions. When I have a question, I have to ask it after class, but typically, instructors do not have the time or leave quickly. This situation leaves many of my uncertainties unresolved and hinders my ability to fully understand the material.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited class time for interaction</li> <li>2. Absence of opportunities to clarify uncertainties</li> <li>3. Instructors' focus on content delivery without addressing questions</li> <li>4. Failure to allocate time for discussion</li> <li>5. Absence of remedial sessions outside of class</li> </ol>	Insufficient time for question & answer	Instructor-student interaction
After class, access to instructors is very difficult. For instance, when I send an email, they often respond very late or not at all. Some instructors do not even have designated office hours, which means that if I have a question, I may have to wait weeks for a response. This situation makes me feel isolated, as there is no one available to assist me.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of designated office hours</li> <li>2. Instructors' unresponsiveness to emails or calls</li> <li>3. Absence of spaces conducive to interaction outside of class</li> <li>4. Time constraints for instructors in communicating with students</li> <li>5. Lack of access to instructors in urgent situations</li> </ol>	Limited accessibility to instructors outside of classrooms	

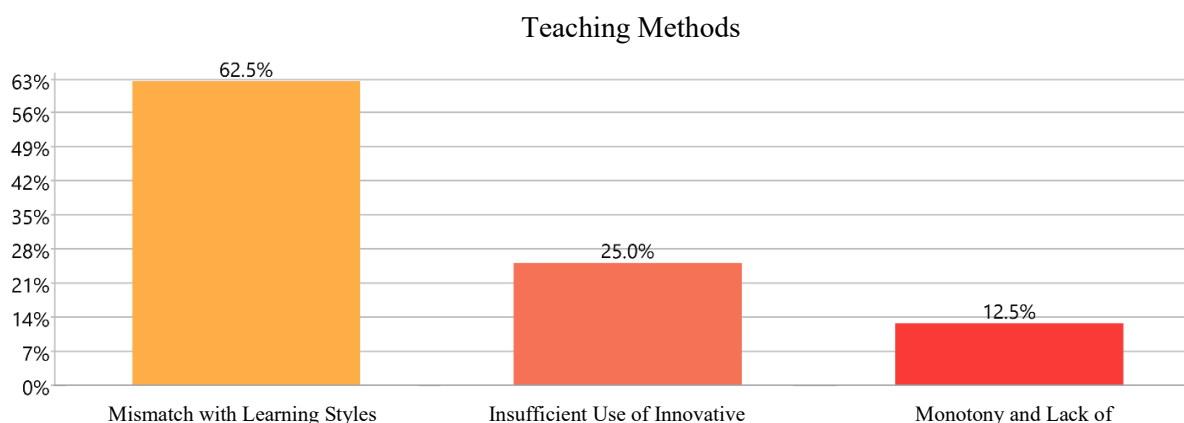
As a student with a hands-on learning style, I frequently find that the teaching methods of instructors do not align with my needs. For example, in technical courses, we spend most of our time studying theories and rarely have the opportunity to engage in practical work. Even when I request that instructors pay more attention to my needs, I am typically overlooked.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overlooking individual differences</li> <li>2. Failure to provide personalized feedback</li> <li>3. Lack of support for students with special needs</li> <li>4. Misalignment of teaching methods with various learning styles</li> <li>5. Absence of educational programs suitable for students' levels</li> </ol>	Neglect of individual needs	
I expected to have access to a wide range of digital resources at the university, but unfortunately, this is not the case. For instance, I struggle to find academic articles or up-to-date eBooks for my research. Some instructors do not use online platforms at all, which means everything is paper-based.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of access to electronic books and articles</li> <li>2. Failure to utilize online learning platforms</li> <li>3. Absence of up-to-date digital educational resources</li> <li>4. Limitations on access to scientific databases</li> <li>5. Lack of training on using digital resources</li> </ol>	Limited access to digital resources	Educational facilities and resources
Our university library is quite deficient. Most of the books are outdated, and there are no new resources available. Moreover, the study space is very limited and always crowded. If I want to find a specific book or article, I typically have to go to other libraries, which is quite time-consuming.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scarcity of printed books and resources</li> <li>2. Absence of suitable study spaces</li> <li>3. Lack of access to international resources</li> <li>4. Absence of amenities in the library</li> <li>5. Failure to update library resources</li> </ol>	Inadequate library facilities	

Our university classrooms are inadequately equipped. For instance, the video projectors are frequently malfunctioning, and the internet connection often drops. Additionally, some classrooms lack smart boards, forcing instructors to rely on traditional blackboards. This situation renders the classes unengaging and outdated.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of video projectors or smart boards</li> <li>2. Failure to use educational software</li> <li>3. Absence of high-speed internet or digital equipment</li> <li>4. Malfunctioning existing classroom equipment</li> <li>5. Lack of facilities for interactive presentations</li> </ol>	Lack of technological equipment in classrooms	
University examinations primarily assess memorization and do not evaluate our practical or analytical skills. For example, in technical courses, we are required to memorize formulas, but we are never asked to apply them to real-world problems. This leads to a situation where I forget everything after the exam.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasis on memorization of content</li> <li>2. Absence of analytical or practical questions</li> <li>3. Failure to assess practical skills</li> <li>4. Focus on minutiae of low significance</li> <li>5. Lack of diversity in exam questions</li> </ol>	Memorization-centric examinations	Evaluation and Feedback
After examinations, I receive no feedback from instructors; I only see my grade without understanding where I went wrong or how I can improve. This fosters a sense that no one cares about my progress and that only grades matter.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Absence of feedback after exams</li> <li>2. Failure to provide suggestions for improvement</li> <li>3. Overlooking students' strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>4. Neglect of student progress</li> <li>5. Absence of performance review sessions</li> </ol>	Insufficient constructive feedback	
At the university, most assessments rely on written examinations, and alternative methods such as projects or presentations are seldom utilized. This approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focus on written examinations</li> </ol>	Lack of variation in	

encourages me to study solely for the exams, after which I tend to forget everything. I wish they would employ more varied assessment methods to gauge our diverse skills.	2. Absence of practical projects or presentations 3. Failure to employ diverse assessment methods 4. Lack of assessment of teamwork skills 5. Failure to conduct continuous assessment throughout the semester	evaluation methods	
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## Teaching Methods

One of the main categories in students' perceptions of deficiencies in the teaching-learning process is teaching methods. Students frequently commented on the teaching approaches employed by professors, asserting that these methods are often uniform, unappealing, and ineffective. They feel that professors rely on traditional, lecture-based methods, which diminishes their engagement and interest in learning. Additionally, students noted the lack of innovative teaching methods and the mismatch between teaching approaches and diverse learning styles. This category includes three main subcategories, which will be elaborated upon in the following sections (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Teaching Methods and Related Subcategories

### *Monotony and Lack of Engagement*

Students express that the teaching methods employed by professors are often monotonous and dull. They perceive that classes are conducted uniformly, without variation, which significantly diminishes their interest and participation. For instance, excessive reliance on lecture-based teaching, without engaging students in the learning process, is cited as a primary reason for this monotony. Students report feeling like passive listeners, lacking an active role in their learning.

As one student stated: *Classes are very dry and monotonous. The professor just stands and reads from the slides. There is no interaction, and I lose focus after 10 minutes.*

Another student added: *I feel that classes are more like a one-way lecture. The professor just talks, and we merely listen. This teaching method is really boring and causes me to lose interest in the subject.*

### *Insufficient Use of Innovative Methods*

Students feel that professors do not utilize modern educational techniques, such as interactive learning, project-based approaches, or educational technologies, leading to classes that lack both engagement and effectiveness. They believe that integrating digital tools, participatory methods, and practical projects could significantly enhance the learning experience, yet professors tend to adhere to traditional formats.

One student remarked: *I think if professors used methods like group work or practical projects, classes would be much more engaging. Unfortunately, most classes are conducted in a purely theoretical manner.*

Another student stated: *In other universities, we have seen the use of digital tools and interactive methods, but here everything is quite traditional. Even videos or PowerPoint presentations are rarely used.*

### *Mismatch with Learning Styles*

Students indicate that the teaching methods employed by professors are not aligned with their varied learning styles. For example, some students prefer to learn concepts through hands-on experiences, while professors predominantly emphasize theory. This mismatch hampers the ability of some students to grasp the materials effectively and detracts from their enjoyment of the learning process.

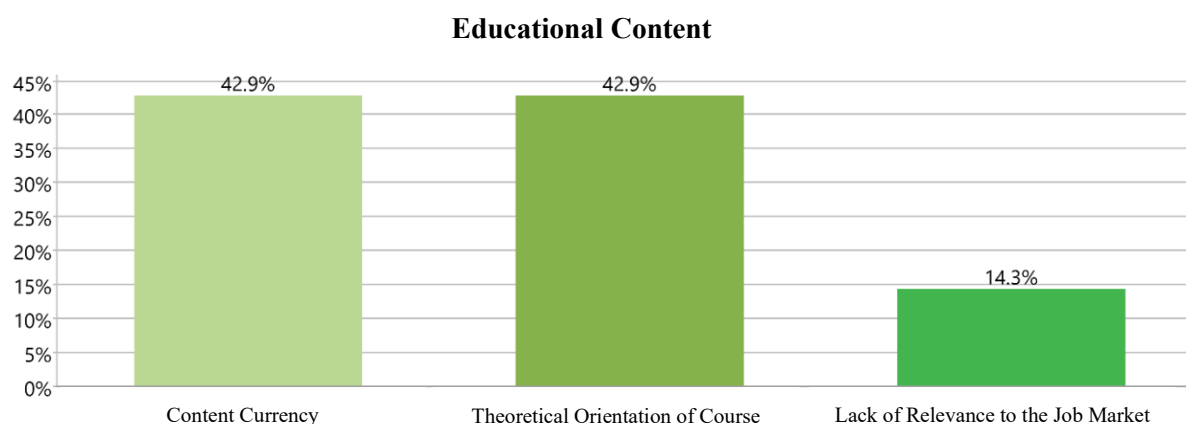
One student stated: *I prefer experiential learning, but most classes are just theoretical. When we don't engage with the material practically, it's very difficult to remember or understand it.*

Another student noted: *I learn better through listening, but some of my classmates learn best through seeing or doing. Unfortunately, the professors' teaching methods primarily cater to auditory learners, which presents challenges for others.*

These three subcategories indicate that students are broadly dissatisfied with current teaching methods, feeling that these approaches do not fully meet their learning needs. Improving teaching methods and adopting innovative and diverse approaches could enhance the students' engagement and interest in learning.

### Educational Content

Another principal category in students' perceptions of deficiencies in the teaching-learning process is educational content (Figure 3). Students frequently cite issues such as *the theoretical orientation of the content, the lack of currency in the material, and the disconnection between course content and real-world job market needs*. They feel that the material presented in classes is often outdated, impractical, and misaligned with the contemporary demands of society and professional environments. This category encompasses three main subcategories, which will be elaborated upon in the subsequent sections.



**Figure 3.** Educational Content and Related Subcategories



### *Theoretical Orientation of Course Content*

Students argue that the content of the courses is predominantly theoretical and lacks practical and applicable material. This situation hinders their ability to establish a meaningful connection between the academic topics studied and their real-world applications. Students highlight that experiential learning of concepts could enhance their understanding and retention of the material; however, course content is largely restricted to the presentation of abstract theories and concepts. For instance, one student remarked:

*Most of the time we only learn theory and never understand how these concepts apply in the real world. This makes a lot of what we learn seem irrelevant.*

Another student noted: *I believe that if there were a greater focus on the practical application of the material, the learning experience would be much more engaging and beneficial. Unfortunately, most classes concentrate solely on theory.*

### *Content Currency*

Students express concerns that the content of certain courses is outdated and does not align with recent advancements in the field of humanities. This situation leads students to feel that they are not acquiring new and relevant knowledge. They indicate that the material presented in classes often pertains to past years and is not current. As a result, students feel they are not learning anything new or useful, and that the course content is distant from the realities of contemporary society.

One student stated: *Some of the books and resources used in class date back 10 to 20 years. This makes us feel that we are learning about things that are no longer applicable.*

Another student commented: *I think if the course content were updated, we would be much better able to connect with current societal issues. Unfortunately, much of the material is old and does not reflect new developments.*

### *Lack of Relevance to the Job Market*

Students feel that the course content is not aligned with the needs of the job market and the skills required in professional environments. This disconnect results in numerous challenges for students after they graduate. They believe that this situation leaves them underprepared for entering the job market, as they have not acquired the necessary skills. Students assert that the course content

should focus more on practical and applicable skills to better prepare them for workplace environments.

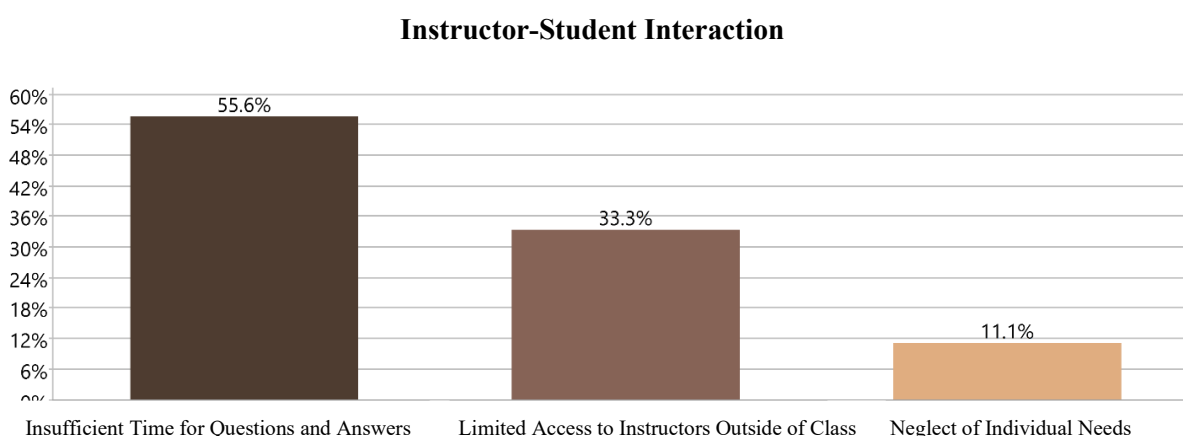
One student commented: *I feel that what I learn in class has no relevance to the work I want to do after graduation. This makes me feel as though I am wasting my time.*

Another student stated: *If the course content paid more attention to practical skills and the needs of the job market, we would be much better prepared for our futures. However, unfortunately, most of the material is theoretical, with minimal focus on practical applications.*

These three subcategories indicate that students are widely dissatisfied with the current educational content, feeling that it does not adequately meet their learning needs and preparedness for the future. Enhancing course material with a greater emphasis on practical and applicable aspects could contribute to increased student satisfaction and better readiness for entering the job market.

### Instructor-Student Interaction

Another principal category in students' perceptions of deficiencies within the teaching-learning process is the interaction between instructors and students (Figure 4). Students frequently report a lack of effective interaction with their professors, asserting that this hampers their ability to fully capitalize on learning opportunities. They feel that instructors do not allocate sufficient time to respond to questions, provide guidance, or establish constructive relationships with students. This category encapsulates four main subcategories, which will be elaborated upon subsequently.



**Figure 4.** Instructor-Student Interaction and Related Subcategories

### *Insufficient Time for Questions and Answers*

Students indicate that instructors do not devote adequate time to addressing their questions. They contend that this lack of interaction leads to unresolved ambiguities and hinders their comprehension of the material. Students express that question-and-answer sessions could significantly enhance their learning experience; however, such opportunities are often not available in the classroom. For example, one student stated:

*In class, there typically isn't enough time to ask questions. The professor just delivers the content, and then the class ends. If we have questions, we must seek answers ourselves.*

Another student remarked: *I feel that if we had more question-and-answer sessions, we could learn the material much better. Unfortunately, this opportunity arises infrequently.*

### *Limited Accessibility to Instructors Outside of Class*

Students highlight that access to instructors outside of class hours is limited. They believe this restriction prevents them from receiving the necessary guidance. Students report that instructors are often unavailable, and even when they attempt to reach out, they do not receive responses.

One student conveyed: *I have tried to contact my professor several times to ask questions, but they usually do not respond. This makes me feel isolated and as though there is no one to assist me.*

Another student stated: *If instructors were more accessible, we could make much better use of their guidance. Unfortunately, most are only present during class and are unavailable afterward.*

### *Neglect of Individual Needs*

Students feel that instructors do not adequately consider individual differences and their specific needs. They argue that this oversight prevents some students from fully benefiting from learning opportunities. Students contend that instructors should pay greater attention to their individual needs and adapt their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles.

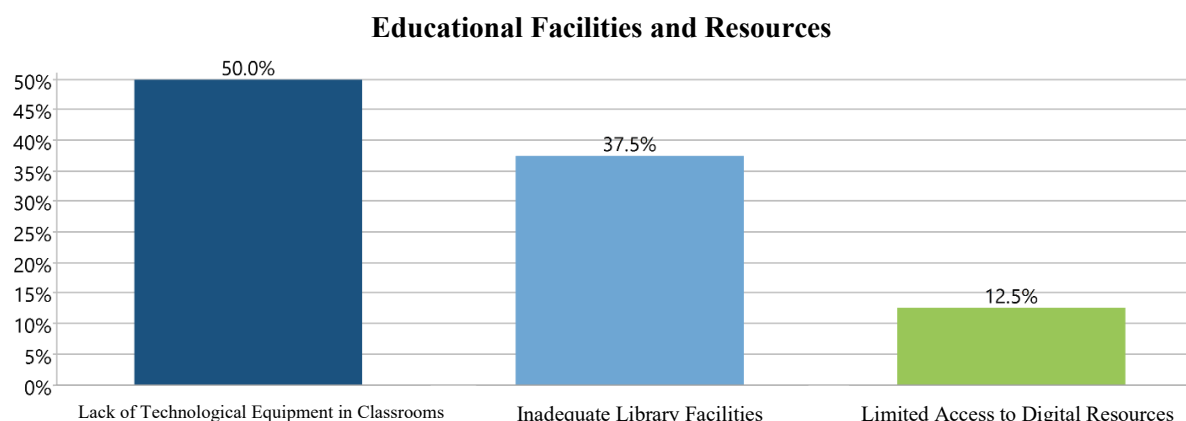
One student noted: *I learn better through auditory methods, but some of my classmates learn more effectively through visual or kinesthetic approaches. Unfortunately, the teaching methods employed predominantly favor those who learn through listening, leaving others struggling.*

Another student expressed: *I believe that if instructors paid more attention to our individual needs, we would be able to learn the material much better. However, unfortunately, most do not seem to address this issue.*

These subcategories reveal that students are significantly dissatisfied with the lack of effective interaction with instructors and feel this deficiency inhibits their ability to fully leverage learning opportunities. Enhancing instructor-student interaction and paying greater attention to individual students' needs could contribute to increased satisfaction and improved performance.

### Educational Facilities and Resources

Another principal category in students' perceptions of deficiencies within the teaching-learning process is educational facilities and resources (Figure 5). Students frequently cite a lack of necessary facilities and resources for effective learning. They believe that these deficiencies impede their ability to fully leverage learning opportunities and diminish the overall quality of education. This category comprises three main subcategories, which are elaborated upon below.



**Figure 5.** Educational Facilities and Resources and Related Subcategories Limited Access to Digital Resources

Students indicate that access to digital and online resources is restricted. They feel this limitation prevents them from utilizing current and diverse materials for their learning. Students note that access to e-books, scholarly articles, and databases could significantly enhance their learning experience; however, these resources are often unavailable. For example, one student stated:

*I need scholarly articles for my research, but access to these articles is very limited. This situation makes it difficult for me to conduct thorough research.*

Another student remarked: *If we had more e-books and online resources, we could learn the material much better. Unfortunately, access to these resources is quite scarce.*

### *Inadequate Library Facilities*

Students express concerns that the libraries within their faculties lack sufficient and up-to-date resources. They feel that this issue restricts their ability to easily access the materials they require. Students assert that libraries should be updated more frequently and should offer a greater variety of resources.

One student commented: *I need specific books for my projects, but these books are not available in the library. This situation hinders my ability to complete my projects effectively.*

Another student stated: *I believe that if libraries were updated more regularly, we could make much better use of the resources available. Unfortunately, most of the books are outdated, and there is a lack of new materials.*

### *Lack of Technological Equipment in Classrooms*

Students feel that classrooms are not equipped with digital tools and educational technologies. They believe that this lack of resources diminishes the engagement and effectiveness of the learning process. Students indicate that the use of digital tools such as projectors, smart boards, and educational software could significantly enhance their learning experience; however, these tools are frequently absent from classrooms.

One student remarked: *I feel that if classrooms were equipped with digital tools, we could learn the material much more effectively. Unfortunately, most classrooms only have a chalkboard and chalk.*

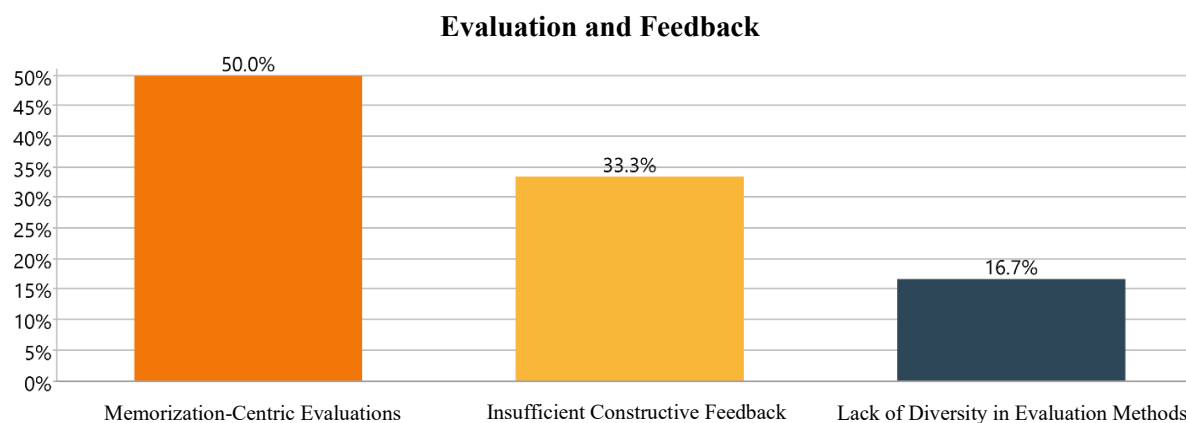
Another student added: *I think that the use of educational technologies could make classes more engaging and effective. However, unfortunately, most classrooms are not equipped with these tools.*

These three subcategories show that students are significantly dissatisfied with the lack of educational facilities and resources, feeling that this deficiency prevents them from fully capitalizing on learning opportunities. Enhancing educational facilities and resources could contribute to increased student satisfaction and improved academic performance.

### **Evaluation and Feedback**

Another principal category that emerges in students' perceptions of deficiencies within the teaching-learning process is evaluation and feedback. Students regularly express concerns regarding issues such as the memorization-oriented nature of assessment methods, the lack of

constructive feedback, and the limited diversity in evaluation approaches. They believe that current assessment methods focus predominantly on rote memorization rather than adequately measuring their analytical and practical skills. This category comprises three main subcategories, each of which is elucidated below.



**Figure 6.** Evaluation and Feedback and Related Subcategories

### Memorization-Centric Evaluations

Students indicate that evaluation methods predominantly emphasize content retention, failing to adequately assess their analytical and practical skills. They feel that this approach leads to a focus on memorization for examinations rather than encouraging deeper learning. Students suggest that assessment methods should prioritize the evaluation of analytical abilities and problem-solving skills. For instance, one student remarked:

*Examinations mostly focus on memorizing content; instead of assessing our abilities, they merely test our memory. This leads to forgetting everything after the exam.*

Another student stated: *I believe that if exams were more centered on assessing analytical and practical skills, we could learn the material much more effectively. Unfortunately, most exams are indeed memorization-based.*

### Insufficient Constructive Feedback

Students report that instructors do not provide adequate and constructive feedback regarding their performance. They feel that this deficiency hinders their ability to identify and improve upon their

weaknesses. Students express that constructive feedback could significantly assist them in enhancing their performance; however, such opportunities are often not made available in the classroom.

One student noted: *I feel that if instructors provided us with more feedback, we could significantly improve our performance. Unfortunately, most just assign grades without any explanations.*

Another student commented: *I think that constructive feedback is crucial, but unfortunately, most instructors do not prioritize it. If they offered us more feedback, we would be able to learn much better.*

#### *Lack of Diversity in Evaluation Methods*

Students feel that the evaluation methods lack necessary diversity, being predominantly limited to written examinations. They believe that this limitation overlooks other important skills, such as class participation or project execution. Students assert that evaluation methods should be more diverse, adequately assessing their various skills.

One student expressed: *I believe that if evaluation methods were more varied, we could better showcase our different skills. Unfortunately, most assessments are confined to written exams.*

Another student added: *I feel that if methods such as projects or presentations were also utilized for evaluation, we could demonstrate our abilities much more effectively. However, unfortunately, most evaluations consist solely of written exams.*

These three subcategories indicate that students are widely dissatisfied with the current evaluation and feedback methods, feeling that these approaches do not fully meet their learning needs. Improving assessment methods and providing constructive feedback could enhance student satisfaction and performance.

In examining deficiencies in the teaching-learning process, students have highlighted multiple challenges that negatively impact their educational experience. They cite the monotony and lack of engagement in teaching methods, the theoretical focus and outdated educational content, insufficient effective interaction with instructors, inadequate educational facilities and resources, and the memorization-oriented nature of evaluation as primary concerns. Students believe that these deficiencies prevent them from fully utilizing learning opportunities and acquiring the necessary skills for entering the job market. Enhancing teaching methods, increasing engagement with instructors, providing better facilities, and reforming evaluation practices could contribute to

heightened student satisfaction and performance, ultimately rendering the learning process more engaging and effective.

## **Discussion**

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the teaching-learning processes at the College of Humanities in Islamic Azad University (Science & Research Branch), revealing critical insights into students' perspectives on their educational experiences. By employing grounded theory methodology and engaging with a diverse group of students through semi-structured interviews, the research has identified significant deficiencies across five main categories: teaching methods, educational content, faculty interaction, facilities and resources, and assessment methods. These findings underscore the complexity of the educational landscape and the necessity of understanding student experiences to foster improvements in higher education.

One of the primary issues identified by the students was the monotony and lack of engagement in teaching methods. This reflects an excessive reliance on traditional instructional approaches that may not effectively engage students or accommodate their diverse learning styles. Research indicates that employing innovative teaching methods, such as interactive classes, flipped classrooms, and blended learning, can enhance student participation and learning outcomes. In this study, the students expressed that existing teaching methods are often unidirectional and lacking in variety, which can lead to decreased motivation and interest in learning. These findings align with previous studies that emphasize how uniform and unengaging teaching methods can compromise the quality of learning. For instance, the research conducted by Rezaei and Vahdat (2018) demonstrated that traditional and non-interactive teaching methods could result in reduced student motivation and participation. Additionally, the work of Mousavi & Tohidi (2022) and Talan and Gulsecen (2019) underscored that the implementation of modern teaching strategies, such as flipped classrooms and blended learning, could foster greater student engagement and improve learning outcomes. These studies suggest that diversity in teaching methods and the integration of educational technologies can positively impact students' learning experiences.

The students also highlighted the theoretical orientation of educational content and its disconnect from practical needs and labor market demands. This issue indicates that the material presented in classes may be overly focused on theoretical concepts, neglecting the practical applications and



real-world relevance of these ideas. The gap between theory and practice can lead students to feel unprepared for entering the job market upon graduation. Furthermore, students mentioned the lack of updates to the educational content, which can result in the dissemination of outdated information that is not aligned with recent developments in the field of humanities. These findings are consistent with research that emphasizes the necessity of continuously updating educational content and aligning it with labor market needs to enhance the effectiveness of higher education. Moreover, this study reinforces findings by Akidi and Elhampour (2020), which indicated that educational content in many universities is excessively theoretical and often overlooks practical applications. The study by Okolie et al., (2019) reiterated the importance of continuous updates to educational content and its relevance to labor market requirements as essential for improving the efficacy of higher education. These results underscore the necessity for educational content to be designed in a manner that adequately prepares students for the challenges of the real world.

One of the issues raised by students was the lack of time for questions and answers and the limited access to instructors outside of class. This indicates that opportunities for interactive engagement between instructors and students are constrained, which may hinder students from addressing ambiguities and questions during the learning process. Effective interaction between instructors and students is a key factor in academic success, and research has demonstrated that access to instructors and timely feedback can significantly enhance students' learning experiences. Additionally, students expressed concerns regarding the lack of attention to their individual needs, suggesting a need for personalized teaching approaches that consider the diverse differences among students. These findings align with those of Ahmadi and Gharib Tarzeh (2022), which illustrated that effective interaction between instructors and students is a crucial element of academic success. Furthermore, research by Soltani and Shamsi (2024) emphasized that access to instructors and the provision of timely feedback can aid in improving students' learning outcomes. These studies indicate that increasing interactive opportunities between instructors and students could have a positive impact on the learning experience.

Weaknesses in educational facilities and resources, including insufficient digital resources and inadequate library facilities, were also highlighted as challenges. In today's world, where digital technologies play a vital role in education, a lack of access to digital resources can impede effective student learning. Furthermore, libraries that are outdated or lack sufficient resources can diminish

the quality of research and learning. These findings are consistent with literature indicating that access to appropriate and updated educational resources is a key factor in academic success. The findings regarding weaknesses in educational facilities and resources are corroborated by Akram et al. (2022), who found that access to suitable and current educational resources is essential for academic achievement. Additionally, research by Shahzad and Ahmadkhan (2023) emphasized that libraries lacking proper updates or adequate resources could negatively impact the quality of research and learning. These results suggest that enhancing educational facilities and resources could improve the learning process.

Students also noted the memorization-oriented nature of examinations and the lack of constructive feedback. This highlights that the current assessment system prioritizes content retention rather than fostering a deep understanding of concepts and their applications. Such an approach may lead to superficial learning and inhibit students from developing analytical and critical skills. Furthermore, the absence of constructive feedback from instructors can impede student progress, as timely and useful feedback is essential for helping students identify their strengths and weaknesses and make improvements. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing that diverse assessments and effective feedback are integral to enhancing the learning process. This aligns with the study by Masuku et al. (2021), which found that assessment systems overly focused on memorization can result in superficial learning. Additionally, research by Jafari (2022) underscored that constructive and timely feedback could assist students in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and facilitate improvement. These studies illustrate that reforming assessment systems and providing effective feedback can contribute significantly to enhancing the quality of learning.

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that students at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Science and Research face numerous challenges in the teaching-learning processes. These challenges include uniform teaching methods, a theoretical curriculum that is poorly aligned with labor market demands, insufficient effective interaction between instructors and students, inadequate educational facilities and resources, and ineffective assessment systems. To enhance the quality of education in this faculty, it is imperative to implement changes in teaching methodologies, update curricular content, increase interactions between instructors and students, upgrade educational facilities, and reform assessment systems. Such changes could not only

improve the learning experience of students but also contribute to the overall enhancement of higher education quality within the institution.

## Conclusion

On the whole, the themes that emerged from the data highlight the multifaceted challenges the students face, which include traditional pedagogical approaches that fail to engage students, outdated educational content that lacks relevance to real-world applications, inadequate opportunities for meaningful interaction with faculty, insufficient resources and facilities, and assessment practices that prioritize memorization over practical skill application. The insights gathered from this study emphasize the importance of aligning pedagogical strategies with student needs to enhance their educational experiences and outcomes.

## *Practical Implications*

1. **Revamping Teaching Methods:** Educators and curriculum developers should incorporate diverse pedagogical approaches, including active learning, group work, and technology-enhanced instruction. Training programs for instructors on contemporary teaching strategies can help to improve student engagement and accommodate various learning styles.
2. **Innovating Educational Content:** Educational materials should be regularly updated to reflect current trends and practices in the field. Collaborations with industry professionals can help integrate real-world applications into the curriculum, making learning more relevant and impactful for students.
3. **Enhancing Faculty Interaction:** Institutions should facilitate greater interaction between students and faculty by promoting mentorship programs, regular feedback sessions, and accessible office hours. This can help create a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and engaged.
4. **Improving Facilities and Resources:** Universities need to invest in modern teaching resources and infrastructure, including updated technology, study spaces, and library resources. Ensuring that classrooms are equipped with the necessary tools for effective learning is crucial for fostering a productive educational atmosphere.
5. **Revising Assessment Methods:** Assessment practices should be diversified to include project-based evaluations, presentations, and peer assessments that focus on practical skills and

critical thinking. By moving beyond traditional exams, educators can better gauge student comprehension and application of knowledge.

By addressing these areas of deficiency and implementing the suggested improvements, higher education institutions can create a more dynamic and effective learning environment that better meets the needs of students, ultimately enhancing their educational experiences and outcomes.

### 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 the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

### Author contributions

S. F.S.N., M.J.P. and K.S. 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

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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