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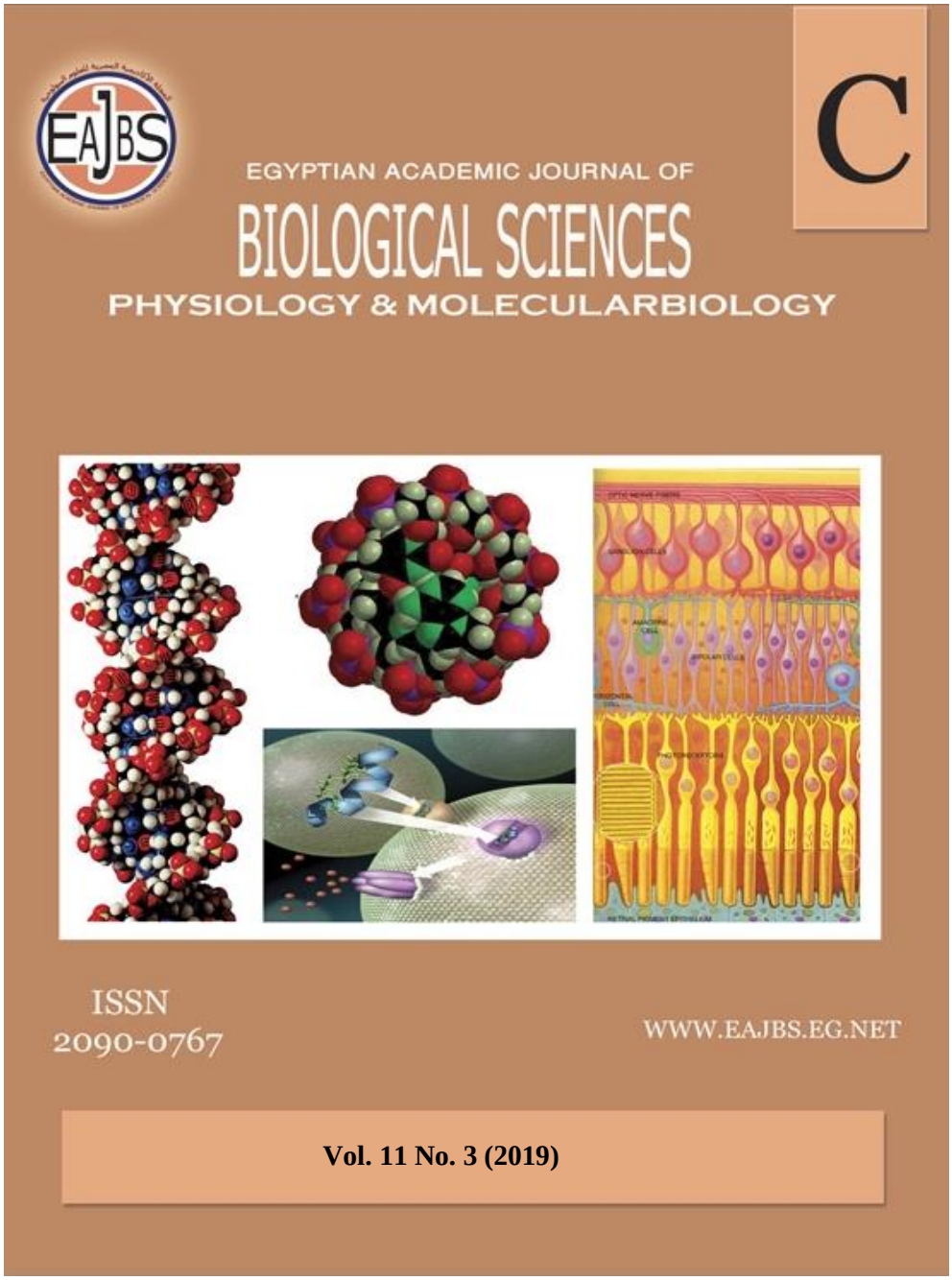

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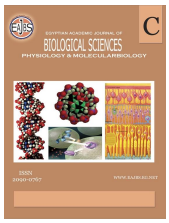

The Educational Environment in a New Medical School Compared With an Old International School

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measure (DREEM) is used to measure the medical educational environment. This study aimed to assess students' perceptions of the educational environment in Medical College, University of Hail using the DREEM. The hypothesis was that both strengths and weaknesses would be identified.

Methods: The DREEM was administered to students in all year's levels of the medical school, University of Hail. The data were collected and compared with Dundee University medical school.

Result: A total of 150 (66.70%) completely responded to the 50 statements. They were 72.3% male and 61.1% female students. The overall mean score of this study was 110.79 which indicates that students in medical school had positive perceptions toward their educational environment.

Conclusion: The DREEM is a valuable tool to assess the educational environment for newly developed medical school compared with well-developed health institutions to give a clear indication of the priorities for reform of the curriculum.

The students in medical school, University of Hail had positive perceptions toward their educational environment. At the same time improvement is required across all domains of the educational environment at this institution especially in the subscales of Students' academic self-perception and Students' social self-perception.

INTRODUCTION

The Dundee Ready Educational Environment Measure (DREEM) is used in the health professions to develop and analyze undergraduate educational environments (Roff S,*et al.* 1997). DREEM has been highly reliable for institutions to identify shortcomings and formulate changes in the curriculum (Dimoliatis ID.*et al.*, 2010; Edgren G. *et al.*, 2010; Veerapen K. et al. 2010; and, Zawawi AH, *et al.*, 2012).

It is a useful tool to provide feedback on the weaknesses and strengths of the educational climate at particular educational institutions. DREEM provides a standardized way for comparisons between medical schools as well as allowing them to benchmark their educational climate (Hammond, S. M.,*et al.*, 2012). Indeed, evaluation of the educational climate has been highlighted as key to the delivery of high quality medical education (Dent, J. A, and Harden, R. M. 2009). Therefore, to conduct such an evaluation, a valid and reliable tool is vital.

The medical education environment is usually complex and unique (Veerapen K, and McAleer S. 2010); its most important determinant is the curriculum (Al-Ayed IH,and Sheik SA. 2008). Studies have shown that the educational environment affects students' achievement, happiness, motivation and success (Al-Ayed IH, and Sheik SA. 2008;, Arzuman H, *et al.*,2010; Demiroren M,*et al.* 2008;and Veerapen K, McAleer S. 2010). The medical educators are attempting to reform the educational environment so as to make it student friendly without compromising the standards and the quality of learning with systematic feedback and assessment (Mojaddidi MA,*et al.*, 2013).

This study aimed to assess student perceptions of the educational environment at a single medical college, using DREEM; our hypothesis was that both strengths and weaknesses would be identified. The results, by providing a baseline, might offer a starting point for instituting measures towards curricular reform.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It was a cross-sectional, questionnaire-based study; data were collected from the College of Medicine; University of Hail. The curriculum designed for the College of Medicine is an integrated system-based and consists of several modules. Each module encompasses new trends in Medical Education (like independent learning, problem-based learning (PBL), integration, and team-based learning (TBL) and community orientation).

Sample size:

The total number used in this study was 150 medical students from different years of undergraduate students including both males and females.

Study instrument:

After the Institutional Ethics Board approval from College of Medicine, University of Hail the DREEM questionnaire sheet was handed to all students present in the class during a routine lecture. The information sheet gave a brief introduction of the aim of the study and all items were explained in Arabic. The questionnaire was anonymous; it was to be voluntarily self-administered. Since it was anonymous, a separate consent form was not collected. In the event that questionnaires were returned filled, consent was implicit; non-consent was presumed when questionnaires were returned blank.

The questionnaire has 50 items that assess five domains (Roff S,*et al.* 1997):

(1) Students' perceptions of learning [SPoL] (12 items; maximum score 48)
(2) Students' perceptions of teachers [SPoT](11 items; maximum score 44)
(3) Students' academic self-perception [SASP] (8 items; maximum score 32)
(4) Students' perceptions of atmosphere [SPoA] (12 items; maximum score 48)
(5) Students' social self-perception [SSSP] (7 items; maximum score 28).

Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 0-4 (0-strongly disagree, 1-disagree, 2-unsure, 3-agree and 4-strongly agree). There are nine negative items (items 4, 8, 9, 17, 25, 35, 39, 48 and 50), for which correction is made by reversing the scores; thus after correction, higher scores indicate disagreement with that item. Items with a mean score of ≥3.5 are true positive points; those with a mean of ≤2 are problem areas; scores in between these two limits indicate aspects of the environment that could be enhanced. The maximal global score for the questionnaire is 200, and the global score is interpreted as follows: 0-50=very poor; 51-100=many problems; 101-150=more positive than negative; 151-200=excellent (Genn JM. 2001).

Reliability analysis was applied to determine the internal consistency of the DREEM inventory. Internal consistency of items was evaluated by the Cronbach's alpha, corrected item-total correlation (CITC) and Cronbach's alpha if item deleted (CAID) values. They were analysed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The items were considered to represent an acceptable level of internal consistency if the Cronbach's alpha value within 0.5 to 0.7 and a good level if the Cronbach's alpha value more than 0.7 (Nunally, J. C. 1978; and Streiner, L. D, &Norman, G. R. 2008). An item is considered to highly contribute to the measured construct if CITC value more than 0.3 and CAID value decreased (Yusoff, M. S. B,*et al.*2010).

RESULTS

A total of 150 (66.70%) completely responded to the 50 statements of DREEM. Most of them were male (72.3%) and female (61.1%) medical students. It should be noted that where respondents perceive an item to be irrelevant, they were advised to leave the item blank.

Table 1 reveals that the subscale for SPoL in which the mean total for the subscale was 27.44 (more positive perception) out of a possible 48 while table 2 reports the subscale for SPoT in which the mean total score was 22.71 (moving in the right direction) out of a possible score of 44. Table 3 reports the subscale for SASP with a mean total score of 18.30 (feeling more on the positive side) out of a possible 32. Table 4 reports SPoA with a mean total score of 26.39 (a more positive attitudes) out of a possible 48. Table 5 reports the subscale of SSSP with a mean total score of 15.95 (not too bad) out of a possible 28.

Table 6 shows the domain scores for Medical School in University of Hail and Dundee University. The University of Hail Medical School (A Traditional medical school), the total mean scores of the inventory were significantly lower (110.79) compared with Dundee Medical School (139.34). Tables 7 and 8 showed the Reliability analysis of the 50 items of DREEM according to the five domains. Reliability analysis shows that the overall Cronbach's alpha values for the DREEM were 0.795. It showed a high level of internal consistency in measuring students' perception of the educational climate. The Cronbach's alpha values for the five subscales of the DREEM ranged between 0.784 and 0.818. The subscales showed acceptable to a high level of internal consistency (Nunally, J. C. 1978. and, Streiner, L. D, &Norman, G. R. 2008) in measuring the five aspects of students' perception of the educational climate.

Reliability analysis shows that the original 50-items DREEM had CITC values ranged between 0.050 and 0.645. This result reflected that certain items *p* contribute poorly to the constructs being measured as the CITC

values less than 0.30 (Yusoff, M. S. B,et al.. 2010). In contrast, the CITC values for the 21-items DREEM ranged between 0.320 and 0.645. It indicates that all of the items in the shortened DREEM highly contributed to the constructs being measured as the CITC values more than 0.3 (Yusoff, M. S. B,et al.. 2010).

Table 1: Item scores for Students' perceptions of learning [SPoL].

Item No.	Statements	UH	DU
1	I am encouraged to participate during teaching sessions	2.4*	2.83
7	The teaching is often stimulating	2.11*	2.61
13	The teaching is registrar centred	2.41	2.67
16	The teaching helps to develop my competence	2.01*	3.09
20	The teaching is well focused	2.31	2.68
22	The teaching helps to develop my confidence	2.11*	2.99
24	The teaching time is put to good use	2.15	2.52
25	The teaching over emphasizes factual learning	2.61	2.92
38	I am clear about the learning objectives of the course	2.45	2.79
44	The teaching encourages me to be an active learner	2.12*	2.79
47	Long term learning is emphasized over short term learning	2.56	2.76
48	The teaching is too teacher centred	2.15	2.84
SPoL mean score		**27.44**	**33.49**

*Statistically significant compared to DU.
UH – University of Hail; DU- Dundee University (values adapted from our previous study Al-Hazimi *et al*, 2004 [2])

Table 2: Item scores for Students' perceptions of teachers [**SPoT]**.

Item No.	Statements	UH	DU
2	The course organizers are knowledgeable	2.75	3.3
6	The course organizers espouse a patient centred approach to consulting	2.00	2.92
8	The course organizers ridicule the registrars	1.34*	2.26
9	The course organizers are authoritarian	1.77*	2.24
18	The course organizers have good communication skills with patients	2.20*	2.83
29	The course organizers are good at providing feedback to registrars	2.17*	1.78
32	The course organizers provide constructive criticism here	2.07*	2.46
37	The course organizers give clear examples	2.67	2.77
39	The course organizers get angry in teaching sessions	1.62*	3.04
40	The course organizers are well prepared for their teaching sessions	2.49	2.68
50	The registrars irritate the course organizers	1.63*	2.68
SPoT mean score		**22.71**	**28.96**

*Statistically significant compared to DU.
UH – University of Hail; DU- Dundee University (values adapted from our previous study Al-Hazimi *et al*, 2004 [2]).

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Table 3: Item scores for Students' academic self-perception [**SASP]**.

Item No.	**Statements**	**UH**	**DU**
5	Learning strategies which worked for me before continue to work for me now	1.21*	2.63
10	I am confident about my passing this year	2.84	3.02
21	I feel I am being well prepared for my profession	2.05*	3.04
26	Last years work has been good preparation for this years work	2.42	2.94
27	I am able to memorise all I need	1.75*	1.93
31	I have learnt a lot about empathy in my profession	2.91*	3.03
41	My problem solving skills are being well developed here	2.31*	2.87
45	Much of what I have to learn seems relevant to a career in healthcare	2.81	3.04
SASP mean score		**18.30**	**22.50**

*Statistically significant compared to DU.
UH – University of Hail; DU- Dundee University (values adapted from our previous study Al-Hazimi *et al*, 2004 [2]).

Table 4: Item scores for Students' perceptions of atmosphere [**SPoA]**.

Item No.	**Statements**	**UH**	**DU**
11	The atmosphere is relaxed during consultation teaching	2.17	2.28
12	This course is well timetabled	2.04*	2.46
17	Cheating is a problem on this course	2.35	3.38
23	The atmosphere is relaxed during lectures	2.39	3.15
30	There are opportunities for me to develop interpersonal skills	2.51	3.11
33	I feel comfortable in teaching sessions socially	2.68	3.16
34	The atmosphere is relaxed during seminars / tutorials	2.12	3.02
35	I find the experience disappointing	1.65*	3.01
36	I am able to concentrate well	2.36	2.89
42	The enjoyment outweighs the stress of the course	1.51*	2.91
43	The atmosphere motivates me as a learner	1.86*	2.65
49	I feel able to ask the questions I want	2.75	2.77
SPoA mean score		**26.39**	**34.79**

*Statistically significant compared to DU.
UH – University of Hail; DU- Dundee University (values adapted from our previous study Al-Hazimi *et al*, 2004 [2]).

Table 5: Item scores for Students' social self-perception [**SSSP]**.

Item No.	**Statements**	**UH**	**DU**
3	There is a good support system for registrars who get stressed	1.28*	1.88
4	I am too tired to enjoy the course	2.63	2.68
14	I am rarely bored on this course	1.59*	2.11
15	I have good friends on this course	3.30	3.48
19	My social life is good	2.07*	3.31
28	I seldom feel lonely	2.11	2.92
46	My accommodation is pleasant	2.97	3.22
SSSP mean score		**15.95**	**19.6**

*Statistically significant compared to DU.
UH – University of Hail; DU- Dundee University (values adapted from our previous study Al-Hazimi *et al*, 2004 [2]).

Table 6: Domain scores for medical schools in University of Hail and Dundee University.

Subscales	**Domains**	**UH**	**DU**
1	SPoL	27.44*	33.49
2	SPoT	22.71*	28.96
3	SASP	18.30*	22.50
4	SPoA	26.39*	34.79
5	SSSP	15.95*	19.60
Total mean score		**110.79**	**139.34**

*Statistically significant compared to DU.
UH – University of Hail; DU- Dundee University (values adapted from our previous study Al-Hazimi *et al*, 2004 [2]).

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Table 7: Reliability analysis of the 50 items of DREEM according to the five domains.

Item No.	Statements	CITC	CAID
Students' Perception of Learning (SPoL)			
1	I am encouraged to participate during teaching sessions	0.477	0.789
7	The teaching is often stimulating	0.508	0.789
13	The teaching is registrar centred	0.160	0.798
16	The teaching helps to develop my competence	0.464	0.790
20	The teaching is well focused	0.530	0.788
22	The teaching helps to develop my confidence	0.554	0.786
24	The teaching time is put to good use	0.485	0.788
25	The teaching over emphasizes factual learning	0.152	0.807
38	I am clear about the learning objectives of the course	0.469	0.789
44	The teaching encourages me to be an active learner	0.554	0.786
47	Long term learning is emphasized over short term learning	0.320	0.793
48	The teaching is too teacher centred	0.270	0.810
Students' Perception of Teachers (SPoT)			
2	The course organizers are knowledgeable	0.391	0.793
6	The course organizers espouse a patient-centred approach to consulting	0.050	0.800
8	The course organizers ridicule the registrars	0.188	0.808
9	The course organizers are authoritarian	0.222	0.809
18	The course organizers have good communication skills with patients	0.216	0.797
29	The course organizers are good at providing feedback to registrars	0.494	0.788
32	The course organizers provide constructive criticism here	0.451	0.790
37	The course organizers give clear examples	0.264	0.797
39	The course organizers get angry in teaching sessions	0.285	0.811
40	The course organizers are well prepared for their teaching sessions	0.469	0.789
50	The registrars irritate the course organizers	0.111	0.807
Students' Academic Self Perceptions (SASP)			
5	Learning strategies which worked for me before continue to work for me now	0.184	0.797
10	I am confident about my passing this year	0.209	0.797
21	I feel I am being well prepared for my profession	0.505	0.788
26	Last years work has been a good preparation for this years work	0.294	0.794
27	I am able to memorize all I need	0.321	0.793
31	I have learnt a lot about empathy in my profession	0.368	0.793
41	My problem solving skills are being well developed here	0.645	0.784
45	Much of what I have to learn seems relevant to a career in healthcare	0.421	0.791
Students' Perception of Atmosphere (SPoA)			
11	The atmosphere is relaxed during consultation teaching	0.173	0.798
12	This course is well timetabled	0.350	0.792
17	Cheating is a problem on this course	0.107	0.809
23	The atmosphere is relaxed during lectures	0.410	0.791
30	There are opportunities for me to develop interpersonal skills	0.500	0.788
33	I feel comfortable in teaching sessions socially	0.455	0.789
34	The atmosphere is relaxed during seminars / tutorials	0.298	0.794
35	I find the experience disappointing	0.457	0.818
36	I am able to concentrate well	0.484	0.789
42	The enjoyment outweighs the stress of the course	0.242	0.796
43	The atmosphere motivates me as a learner	0.521	0.788
49	I feel able to ask the questions I want	0.349	0.792
Students' Social Self Perceptions (SSSP)			
3	There is a good support system for registrars who get stressed	0.450	0.790
4	I am too tired to enjoy the course	0.208	0.810
14	I am rarely bored on this course	0.239	0.796
15	I have good friends on this course	0.104	0.799
19	My social life is good	0.202	0.797
28	I seldom feel lonely	0.063	0.802
46	My accommodation is pleasant	0.194	0.797
Total mean score		**0.255**	**0.795**

CITC-Corrected Item-Total Correlation; CAID-Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted

Table 8: Reliability analysis and mean score of the 50 items of DREEM according to the five domains.

Subscales	Domains	UH	DU	CITC	CAID
1	SPoL	27.44*	33.49	0.819	0.811
2	SPoT	22.71*	28.96	0.554	0.824
3	SASP	18.30*	22.50	0.742	0.817
4	SPoA	26.39*	34.79	0.678	0.819
5	SSSP	15.95*	19.60	0.477	0.828

*Statistically significant compared to DU; UH – University of Hail; DU- Dundee University (values adapted from our previous study Al-Hazimi *et al*, 2004 [2]); CITC-Corrected Item-Total Correlation; CAID-Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted

DISCUSSION

Assessment of the climate of an educational program is a valuable tool to ensure quality and to identify areas of improvement (Students 2016). By using the DREEM tool to measure the climates of the educational environment in medical school, we provide a reliable result of the strengths and weaknesses of the institutions of Hail medical school. The overall mean score for the DREEM in this study was 110.79 which indicates that students in medical school had positive perception toward their educational environment. This finding score for a relatively new medical school has drawn attention to some aspects of the institution to encourage them for more improvements.

Among the five main domains, the SPoL subscale, the most affirmative responses received were in relation to being given clear learning objectives, the teaching over emphasizes factual learning and encouraged the participation of students during lectures. The students from University of Hail rated their teaching time is put to good use and long term learning is emphasized over short term learning. Mean scores in the SPoT subscale show that students believe that the teacher has good communication skills, can give clear examples, well-prepared for their classes and patient with their students and public. It should focus the efforts for improvement in the provision of constructive criticism and feedback, which was identified in DREEM studies as well in items 29, 32 and is a critical role of a teacher.

The significant results in relation to the SASP subscale were to students in our school perceived that they are less able to memorize all they needed than students at Dundee medical school. Additionally, they perceived that their problem-solving skills are less being well developed in this school and they feel less being well prepared for their profession. In the SPoA subscale, our students perceived that they find the experience more disappointing than students at Dundee school and that the enjoyment doesn't outweigh the stress of the course.

The low score of the item (Dent, J. A, Harden, R. M. 2009.) In student's SSSP subscale which state if there is a good support system for registrars who get stressed is one of the most significant result with a mean score of 1.28. In all published results of the DREEM inventory, this item score is low so it seems to be a common problem in medical education [Edgren, G.,*et al.* 2010].

Conclusion:

The DREEM is a valuable tool to assess the educational environment for newly developed medical school compared with well-developed health institutions to give a clear indication of the priorities for reform of the curriculum. The students in medical school, University of Hail had positive

perception toward their educational environment. At the same time improvement is required across all domains of the educational environment at this institution especially in the subscales of Students' academic self-perception and Students' social self-perception. Further studies are required to analyze to detect any gender differences in educational environment.

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ARABIC SUMMARY

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يستخدم " مقياس دندي للبيئة التعليمية الجاهز" لقياس البيئة الطبية التعليمية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى قياس آراء طلبة الطب عن البيئة التعليمية في كلية الطب بجامعة حائل في المملكة العربية السعودية، وذلك باستخدام " مقياس دندي للبيئة التعليمية الجاهز". الفرضية هي أنه سيتم تحديد نقاط القوة والضعف للمؤسسة.
تم توزيع استبيانات " مقياس دندي للبيئة التعليمية الجاهز" للطلاب والطالبات في مختلف السنوات التعليمية في كلية الطب بجامعة حائل، ومن ثم تم جمع البيانات ومقارنتها مع كلية الطب بجامعة دندي. يتكون الاستبيان من ٥٠ سؤال موزعة على خمس محاور رئيسية تقيس كلاً من إدراك الطالب للتعليم، وللمعلمين، وللبيئة التعليمية، وللتعليم الذاتي، وإدراك الطالب الذاتي الاجتماعي. تتوزع نتائج هذا المقياس على أربع فئات عددية تعكس آراء الطلبة عن جودة البيئة التعليمية.

أظهرت النتائج إجابة مجموع ١٥٠ طالب وطالبة وهذه النسبة تمثل (٦٦,٧٠٪) من مجموع الطلاب في الكلية، ممثلة بنسبة ٧٢,٣٪ من الطلاب، و ٦١,١٪ من الطالبات. كانت النتيجة الإجمالية ١١٠,٧٩ مما يشير إلى أن الطلاب والطالبات لديهم تصور إيجابي تجاه بيئتهم التعليمية. يعد " مقياس دندي للبيئة التعليمية الجاهز" أداة قيمة لتقييم البيئة التعليمية لكليات الطب المطورة حديثاً مقارنة بكليات الطب المتطورة لإعطاء إشارة واضحة إلى أولويات إصلاح المنهج.

كان لدى طلاب كلية الطب بجامعة حائل إدراك إيجابي تجاه بيئتهم التعليمية. في الوقت نفسه، هناك حاجة إلى التحسين في جميع مجالات البيئة التلعيمية في هذه المؤسسة، خاصة في محور الإدراك التعليمي الذاتي للطالب ومحور إدراك الطالب الذاتي الإجتماعي.