

Is Student Course Satisfaction Related to Instructor Passion about Teaching?

Bassi, F., Grilli, L., Paccagnella, O., Rampichini, C., & Varriale, R. (2017). New insights on students' evaluation of teaching in Italy. In A. Petrucci & R. Verde (Eds.), *SIS 2017. Statistics and Data Science: new challenges, new generations*. 28-30 June 2017 Florence (Italy). Proceedings of the Conference of the Italian Statistical Society. ISBN (online) 978-88-6453-521-0 (online), CC BY 4.0, 2017 Firenze University Press 130

Have you ever wondered whether your level of passion for teaching is in any way related to student evaluations of teaching (SET)? Or, does your subjective feelings of whether there is support for improving teaching correlate with your SET scores? Well, this study attempted to answer those questions. The authors employed multilevel analysis of three different datasets collected from undergraduate students, administrators, and faculty at the University of Padua.

Student data came from the standard university online SET, which was comprised of 18 items tied to a 1 to 10 rating scale of satisfaction. Item 14 specifically assessed student overall satisfaction with the course. The administrative dataset contained information about teachers and all instructional activities at the institution. A third dataset included faculty responses to 20 questions, each having a 1 to 7 scale that measured level of agreement. Previous factor analysis of the 20 items revealed six dimensions of teaching activities and experiences: passion for teaching, passion for research, feeling the need of support for improving teaching activities, will to change teaching activities according to student needs, features of teaching and learning methods, and features of teaching and evaluation activities. Response rate from all faculty surveyed in the institution was slightly lower than 50%.

The authors applied multilevel analysis—using student, course, and instructor characteristics as predictors—with the single-item overall satisfaction score as the dependent variable. Significant student characteristics were the strongest contributors to the model. According to Table 1 (page 134), significant explanatory variables included age (older students assigned higher ratings) and average grade, where higher grade averages were associated with higher ratings. Teacher characteristics were relatively weaker predictors but included age (younger instructors received higher ratings) and two subjective

responses: 1) If the teacher was feeling the need of support for improving teaching activities, overall student satisfaction was lower; and 2) if the teacher expressed a passion for teaching, then ratings were higher.

The findings indicate that student overall course satisfaction is related to whether instructors perceive support for improving teaching and their level of passion about teaching.