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INFLUENCE OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF LECTURERS' POWER SOURCES ON COMPLIANCE IN A SELECTED NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

University education all over the world has been undergoing tremendous challenges due to changes in models of learning, communication techniques and strategies adopted in the classroom. The assessment of lectures' power in the classroom which could have been used in understanding the routes of students' compliance to these learning model, strategies and communication techniques have not been investigated in Nigeria. This study therefore, investigated the influence of students' perception of lecturers' power sources on compliance in a Nigerian University. Using a multistage sampling technique, 431 students were proportionally selected from four campuses of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria. Data for the study was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the hypotheses were tested at 5% level of significance. The results revealed that perceived lecturer's power sources (expert, rewards, legitimate, coercive, and referent) by students significantly jointly influence their level of compliance (p = 0.037) Also, there was a significant difference between male and female students' compliance based on perceived power sources (p = 0.003). While students' class level in the university significantly influence their level of compliance based on perceived lecturers' power sources (p = 0.001). The implication of this study is that, a single factor in power source is not sufficient in influencing students' compliance rather a combination of factors. Therefore, the university management should train and develop lecturers to acquire requisite lecturing qualifications, knowledge and skill in social relationships so that they can exercise control during lectures and also gain compliance with request and instructions from students.

Keywords: compliance, learning, perception, power source, students

INTRODUCTION

In the university, lecture room experience is shaped by a number of factors as it relates to lecturer and student relationship. Understanding changes in the perceptions of students of their lecturers' authority in the classroom can reduce the challenges involved in teaching and learning. All over the world, university education over the years has been undergoing tremendous changes with new models of learning technique introduced with new communication techniques and strategies encouraged (Richmond & McCroskey, 1983).

Within the lecture room, it is expected that students submit to the authority of their lecturers without questioning. Richmond & McCroskey (1984) suggest that, without the communication of power by the teacher over the student, the student may not be able to learn. However, Kearney (1987) noted that when students cooperate willingly in the learning process, the teachers would then teach appropriately. But she pointed out the common frustration that new teachers in the teaching job goes through, and submitted that, some students are not ready to learn coupled with the fact that they show disorderly behaviour different from that of other students. Kearney (1987) further asserted that, teachers influence students to cooperate in the learning process through strategic communication.

Therefore, the different power exhibited by lecturers in challenging situations and conditions would involve giving the student competitive knowledge and skills, expressing positive attitudes (Yordanov, 2015). Power to a certain extent is seen (Hurt, Scott & McCroskey, 1978). These researchers conclude that the more power is applied by the teachers, as a means of control, the more likely it would be required as a means of control in the classroom. Power therefore is seen as the ability of one person influencing another person (Nelson & Quick, 2012). Allen (2003) defined power as a capacity that is possessed by certain actors who chooses to use it over other persons. In class assessment of power usage, the teachers' power is generated and used within the classroom only (Burke, 2011). But Delpit (1988) reported that teachers' power over students involves influencing their views about happenings in the world, Knowledge, intelligence and normality, and by this encourage compulsory schooling to face the future, job and status. Hurt et.al however, concluded that power is a teacher's ability to affect in some way the student's well-being beyond the students own control.

This study relied on French & Raven (1968) bases of social power: legitimate, expert, referent, coercive and reward which they identified as the type of power that people perceive as influencing their compliance. French & Raven (1968) in their study explained and compared legitimate, expert, referent, coercive and reward bases according to the changes or outcome they bring about amongst people in organization. Even though their construction and explanations were not targeted to assess power as it relates to the classroom. However, Richmond & McCroskey (1986) were the first researchers who applied the use of power base in the classroom by restructuring the power bases (legitimate, expert, referent, coercive and reward) to reflect a teacher-student relationship in the classroom as follows:

Legitimate power emanates from the assigned role of the teacher in the lecture hall or room. Legitimate power results from a student's perception of his or her lecturer's as having the right to order, or make certain request based on the function of his or her position as a lecturer. This is so because the lecturer determines the period, venue and duration of time for each lecture meeting and also regulates the interaction in the lecture room according to approved time table. Basically, this power source perceived by the student of his or her lecturer does not go beyond the social university premises. For example, if the lecturer is asking students to take home assignment, solve and come for the next class with the solutions, this request cannot be disregarded by the students.

Coercive power source is the student's perception that his or her lecturer has the power to punish him or her if he or she does not conform to lecture norms and rules. The ability of the lecturers' coercive power arises from the students' expectation that the lecturer will bring upon some punishment for non-conformance to the extent of having a negative effect on her grade points.

Reward power source is the student's perception that his or her lecturer has the ability to provide certain benefits in his or her position as their lecturer. It should be noted here that, the benefits expected here by the students only relates to their career pursuit in school and for that course taken by that lecturer in particular. These rewards must only be seen to be positive and reinforcing by the students and removing any form of negative reinforcement. (Richmond & McCroskey, 1984) posits that coercive and reward power sources are flip sides of the same coin. They explain further that, coercive power involves introducing something unpleasant or removing something pleasant if the student fails to comply while reward power involves introducing pleasant or removing something unpleasant if the student complies.

Expert power source is derived from the student's perception of their lecturer's possession of superior skill or competence and knowledge in required areas for them to achieve their academic discipline. Here, Richmond & McCroskey (1983) were quick to point out that, ideas presented by teachers are not proven in an objective sense but presented with expectation that the students will accept them. As a result of this, the student sees the teacher as competent and knowledgeable. These researchers added that, French & Raven (1968) emphasized the main impact of expert power in changing an individual cognition resulting to change in behaviour required from the influence exerted by the teacher.

Referent power source stems from the student's identification with and respect for the teacher. For this type of power to occur, there must be a relationship existing between two persons. This starts from the desire of the less powerful person (student) to identify with and respect the more powerful person (lecturer). In this relationship, the stronger the student's attraction and identification with the lecturer, the stronger the lecturer's referent power.

From the above explanation of the five power sources, it can be deduced that the more sources of power the lecturer has, the more likely he or she is likely to be

successful influencing students to undertake their assignments and comply with all class instructions and regulations (Essien, 2014).

Compliance is seen as a response or precisely, a submission made by another to a request. This request may be explicit or implicit. The individual to which this request is made to, may not recognize that he or she is being asked to act in a certain way (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) Compliance also is seem as a willingness to permit one's own behaviour to be determined by another person (Karakostas & Zizzo, 2016).

In social Psychology, social influence is recognized as the nucleus and is seen as the words, actions, presence or absence of other persons which could be real or imagined on people thoughts, feeling and attitude or behaviour, and this acts as a push in compliance. Thus, a student in the lecture hall may comply with his or her lecturer's request because of imagined or perceived social power repertoire available to the lecturer. These students' compliance means that, the student's willingness to carry out the lecturers wishes as long as doing so will not require any extra effort that is the person will respond to normal reasonable request in the lecture room that are clearly within the job description of the lecturer (Essien, 2014).

Previous studies on power in the classroom had focused on teacher and students relationships, attribution for compliance, compliance-gaining messages and teachers academic demand that student need to obey them without any objection (Kindsvatter, 1990; Richmond & McCroskey, 1984; Kearney, Plax, Sorenesen, & Smith, 1988; Roach, 1994; Elais & Mace, 2005; Wanders, Dijkstra, Maslowski & van der Veen, 2019: Pomeroy, 2010: Torres, 2016), Camp, 2011; Stoyanova & Ivantchev, 2016; Isiyaku, Ayub & Abdul kadir, 2018; Assadi & Amineh, 2016). Specifically, results of investigation by these authors only reflect the perception and or use of power by either the student or the teacher in the class room without much clarity and assessment to find out if these sources of power can jointly influence compliance of students to instructions, rules and regulations.

However, Richmond & McCroskey (1984) found in their study that students and teachers do not have the same perceptions of power use and that the differential perceptions cannot be explained by self-serving interest and so they suggested that, future research should be focused on students' perception of their teachers' power sources, since students will respond in the classroom on the basis of how they perceive that classroom to be, not on the basis of teachers' perception. It is on this backdrop, that we are bridging this gap in literature. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of students' perception of lecturers' power source on compliance in a selected Nigerian university while the specific objectives are: to determine whether there is a significant difference of students' gender on compliance and to also ascertain whether students' level in the university significantly influences compliance with instructions and assignments.

This study also is out to provide answers to the following research in questions:

1. Will there be an independent and joint influence of lecturers' expert, reward, referent, coercive and legitimate power sources on students' compliance with lecture room instructions and assignments?
2. Is there any gender difference on compliance by students based on their lecturer's power source?
3. Will students' level in the university have any significant influence on their level of compliance to lecture room instructions, assignments and regulations?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social power is seen as the repertoire of power that an individual has whereas influence tactics is seen as the actual usage of specific behaviour in situations (Stakelski & Paynton 1995; Podsakoff & Schriesheim, 1985). For proper understanding and application of social power in organizations, Raven (1992) developed the power interactional model of interpersonal influence in order to elaborate and describe the process an influencing agent would use in choosing a particular power source to gain compliance from a target. According to this model, the decision of an agent (superior) to apply any power source is rational but at the same time influenced by situational factor. For example, the power interaction model posits that when the target (subordinate) tries to attain compliance in a conflict situation he or she may perceive the effectiveness of each power source differently and are quick to comply with a superior's request using expert power and more reluctantly when superiors use coercion. Schwarzwald & Koslowski (1998) however noted that, the power interactional model examines inclusive social power and in addition allows researchers to generate hypotheses for empirical testing. Thus, in the university, a student may comply with a lecturer's request because of an actual or perceived social power repertoire that a lecturer has an actual tactics like the use of particular reward. For example, giving extra points or marks for prompt submission of assignments or being punctual for lectures.

Maxcy (1991) noted that power is important and can be seen as a bedrock upon which teachers use to professionalize teaching. According to McGarity & Butts, (1984) and Woolflolk & McCune-Niicolich, (1984) power is crucial to establish and maintain suitable influence in the classroom as a primary need for instruction, since a lot of time is spent in tasks which tends to predict learning. Teacher student relationship is important due to the fact that teachers can impact knowledge into students for development and future usage (James, 1994; Lezotte, 1992) Stronge, 2002 asserted that, classroom success and students' involvement is enhanced when teachers plan to appreciate the differences in students and the instructional contents, process, product differentiations and the learning environments. Meyers (2007) concluded that teachers in schools affect the attitude of their students in the classroom.

Studies in the area of teacher and student relation or power in the classroom have examined this interaction using French & Raven (1959) taxonomy of expert, reward, coercive, referent and legitimate power sources (Turamn & Schrodt, 2007);

Richmond & McCroskey, 1984; Kearney 1987; Roach, 1994; Elias & Mace, 2005; Stoyanova & Ivantchev, 2016; Assadi & Amineh, 2016). For example, Richmond & McCroskey (1984) study which examined power in the classroom with emphasis on teachers and students' perceptions found that, students perceived their teachers to have used less of coercive power in the classroom but reported a greater perceived use of expert, reward, and referent power. However, the use of coercion in the school environment has been noted to have negative consequences on the students. Aguinis, Nesler, Quigley, Lee & Tedeschi (1996) reported that, the perception of graduate coercive power led to the reduction of the level of faculty's trustworthiness and credibility. According to Assadi & Amineh (2016) study on students' perceptions of teachers' power in high school, university and English language institute, the researchers reported that students' perception of their teachers' possession of coercive power had a high mean score that was second among the power sources. They also indicated that, the interview results conducted with the students showed teacher's coercive power. These researchers further explained that those students who were weak in English blamed their English language teacher for their weakness since they were punished for misbehavior and contempt in school. Furthermore, they reported that during class hours, teachers also were observed exhibiting coercive power which they noted was inimical to the students' future.

The study of Roach (1994) is averse to this negative impression and reported that, affective and cognitive learning of students is linked with their perceptions of instructor's use of soft and less harsh compliance gaining tactics. The researcher went further to explain that when students notice that the instructors are using soft compliance gaining tactic in making request, they are regarded as respectable persons and not authority figures in seeking compliance through the use of force. The study of Turman & Schrodt (2007) which examined students' perception of teacher's power as a function of perceived confirmation found that perceived teachers' confirmation behaviour were more closely associated with students perception of teachers pro-social power use than with anti-social power use. These perceived confirmation behaviours were related with expert and reward more than the ratings of referent and coercive power.

Research Hypotheses

1 Perceived lecturers' expert, rewards, legitimate, coercive, and referent power sources by students will significantly independently and jointly influence their level of compliance with lecture room instructions, assignments and regulations.

2 There will be a significant difference between male and female students' level of compliance to lecture room instructions and assignments based on perceived lecturers' power sources

3 Level of students in the University will significantly influence their compliance to lecture room instructions and assignments based on perceived lecturers' power sources.

METHODS

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The independent variables of the study are power sources (expert, legitimate, reward, coercive and referent) while the dependent variable is student compliance. The entire variables in the study were measured as continuous variables. The study was conducted at four (4) different campuses of Olabisi Onabnjo University (Ago-Iwoye, Sagamu, Ibogun and Ayetoro) Ago- Iwoye, Ogun state, Nigeria. The target population chosen for inclusion in the study was all students in the campuses in the university excluding those who were in industrial practicum, teaching, practice, SIWES or any practical training based on their discipline.

In order to ensure generalizability of study results, the students were selected from different educational level and academic discipline (Faculty of Science, Social and Management Science, Arts, Education, Law College of Agricultural Sciences, College Engineering and Basic Medical Sciences and students from 100 level to 400 level. The sample size for the study was four hundred and thirty-one from the population of the institution.

A multistage sampling technique was used to determine the sample from the population and also to be regarded suitable in overcoming the problems associated with geographically dispersed population when face–to- face contact is required (Hoinvell, Jowell & Associate, 1978). This technique allowed the gathering of student perceptions that are in different faculties and colleges, studying different courses and located at different campuses for inclusion or exclusion.

Lastly, the proportional sampling technique was used to select the four hundred and thirty-one students from the four (4) campuses and faculty for questionnaire administration since the student population for each of these faculties was unequal. The study adopted a set of questionnaires for the collection of data. The questionnaire was segmented into three parts. The first part measured the basic demographic information of the students, the second part measured perceived power sources (expert, reward, legitimate, referent and coercive) using a modified version of a perceived power source scale developed by Hinkin & Schriescheim (1989). The instrument was pilot tested using Tai Solarin University of Education students, a university within the same state with Olabisi Onabanjo University. The Cronbach Alpha obtained after standardization indicated a value of 0.87. The third part measured student compliance using a modified version of a fourteen (14) item compliance scale developed by Essien (2014) with a four (4) response format of Always, Most of the times, sometimes and Not at all. The scale was also pilot tested using 30 students of Tai-Solarin University of Education, Ogun Sate Nigerian. The cronbach Alpha value obtained indicated a value of 0.88.

Due to the sensitive nature of the data being collected, the researcher first sought the permission of each Deans of the Faculties and the participants and obtained same before commencing interaction with the participants. The participation of the students was voluntary and for the provision of suitable response that are socially desired, the anonymity of the participants responses was assured. The researchers required that

no personal information of the students should be supplied except that of department, class level and faculty. The copies of the questionnaire were administered through the assistance of the faculty officers and each level representative during break hours of lectures. A conscious effort was also made to administer the study questionnaire to all levels (100-400). This was undertaken to ensure that, data obtained would provide answers to the research question and to meet the set objective of the study.

The statistical tools used for data analysis in the study were simple percentages, multiple regression, mean comparison (t-test of independent group measures) and one-way analysis of variance respectively. Simple percentages which is a relative value showing hundredth part of any quantity, that is one percent (1%) indicating a part of hundred. This statistic was adopted to analyze the demographic variables of the participants. Also, multiple regression was used to test hypothesis one since it explains the relationship between multiple independent variables and one dependent variable. The dependent variable in multiple regression is modeled such that it is seen as a function of many independent variables with corresponding coefficients and constant term. In addition, mean comparison or t-test of independent group measures compares the mean of a variable in one group to the means of the same variable in one or more other groups. This was used to test hypothesis two so as to evaluate if the data provides evidence that the difference in the sample mean between group is less than or greater than zero. While, one-way analysis of variance (One-way ANOVA) compares the mean of two or more independent groups in order to determine whether there exist statistical evidence showing that the related population means are significantly different. This was used to test hypothesis three.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Variables	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	194	45.0%
	Female	237	55.0%
	Total	**431**	**100.0%**
Age Group	18 - 24 years	387	89.8%
	25 - 30 years	44	10.2%
	Total	**431**	**100.0%**
Educational Qualification	SSCE/WAEC	262	60.8%
	Bachelor Degree	149	34.6%
	OND	20	4.6%
	Total	**431**	**100.0%**

Level in the University	100 Level	54	12.5%
	200 Level	197	45.7%
	300 Level	117	27.1%
	400 Level	63	14.6%
	Total	**431**	**100.0%**
Tribe	Yoruba	385	89.3%
	Igbo	44	10.2%
	Hausa	2	.5%
	Total	**431**	**100.0%**
Faculties	Social and Management Sciences	19	12.7%
	Sciences	33	22.0%
	Arts	17	11.3%
	Education	14	9.3%
	Law	16	10.7%
	College of Agricultural Sciences	12	8.0%
	College of Engineering	3	2.0%
	Basic Medical Sciences	16	10.7%
	Total	**431**	**100.0%**

Source: Sample survey, 2021

Table 1 presented the analysis of the respondent's socio-demographic and personal data, it was revealed that 431 respondents took part in the study, 45.0% are male, while 55.0% are female, with 89.8%, and 10.2%, are from the age bracket of 18 - 24, and 23 - 30 respectively. The table also revealed that 60.8%, 34.6%, and 4.6%, have the educational qualifications of, SSCE/ WAEC, Bachelor Degree, and OND respectively, the table also presented the level of the respondents as 12.5% are in 100 level, 45.7% are in 200, while 27.1% are in 300 level, and 14.6 %, are in 400 level. The table also revealed that 89.3 % of the respondents are from the Yoruba ethnic group, while 10.2% and .5% are from the Igbo and Hausa ethnic groups respectively. Finally, the table depicted that 40.0%, 17.4%, .2%, 2.8%, 1.6%, 34.6%, 2.3%, and .2% of the respondents are from the faculties of Social, Administration and Management Sciences, Sciences, Arts, Education, Law, College of Agricultural Sciences, College of Engineering, and Basic Medical Sciences respectively.

Hypothesis One

This hypothesis states that perceived lecturers' power sources (expert, rewards, legitimate, coercive, and referent) by students will significantly independently and jointly influence their level of compliance. The hypothesis was tested with regression analysis, and the result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Summary table of multiple regression showing the independent and joint influence of lecturers' power sources (expert, reward, legitimate, coercive and referent) on compliance

Variables	Beta (β)	T	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig
expert	.130	2.181					
rewards	-.001	-.001					
legitimate	.210	3.834	.409	.168	.158	17.116	.037
coercive	-.059	-1.290					
Referent	.127	2.178					

Source: Sample survey, 2021

The result of the analysis presented in table 2 above revealed that expert legitimate, and referent power sources significantly and independently influenced their level of compliance at 5% level. The table also revealed that rewards and coercive power sources did not significantly and independently influence their level of compliance.

Furthermore, the result revealed that the perceived lecturers' power sources (expert, rewards, legitimate, coercive, and referent) by students significantly jointly influenced their level of compliance at 5% level (0.037) and also accounted for 17% variance in the dependent variable of level of compliance (R^2=.168). Therefore, the hypothesis one which states, that perceived lecturer's power sources by students (expert, rewards, legitimate, coercive, and referent) will significantly independent and jointly influence their level of compliance is accepted.

Hypothesis Two

The hypothesis states that there will be a significant difference between male and female students' level of compliance to lecture instructions and assignments based on perceived lecturers' power sources. The hypothesis was tested using the t-test for independent measure. And the result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Summary table of t-test showing the differences between male and female students on level of compliance based on perceived lecturer's power sources

Variable	N	Mean	Sd	Df	T	Sig
Male	194	46.53	5.257	429	-2.002	.003
Female	237	47.46	4.331			

Source: Sample survey, 2021

The result presented in table 3 revealed that there is a significant difference between male (X=46.53, SD=5.257) and female (X=47.46, SD=4.331) students compliance based on perceived power sources (0.003). Therefore, the hypothesis which states that, there will be a significant difference between male and female students' compliance based on perceived power sources is accepted.

Hypothesis Three

This hypothesis states that students' level in the university will significantly influence their level of compliance based on perceived lecturer's power sources. The hypothesis was tested using a One-way ANOVA, and the result is presented in table 4.

Table 4 Summary table of ANOVA showing the influence of level of students on their level of compliance

Variables	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Between group	498.890	3	166.297		
Within groups	9353.439	427	21.905	7.592	.001
Total	9852.329	430			

Source: Sample survey, 2021

The result presented in table 4 revealed that students' level in the university significantly influenced their level of compliance based on perceived lecturer's power sources (0.001). Therefore, the hypothesis three which states that level of students in the university will significantly influence their level of compliance based on perceived lecturers' power sources is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The study aimed at finding out if students' perceptions of their lecturer's power sources will influence their compliance with instructions and regulations, whether any difference exit in compliance level between male and female students and

whether students' level have any influence on compliance with class instructions based on perceptions of their lectures power sources. The researchers adopted French & Raven (1959) taxonomy of power sources and the results indicate some similarities and differences as obtained in other power in the classroom studies.

For hypothesis one, the first part indicated a significant influence of perceived expert, legitimate and referent power sources on compliance of students with classroom instructions and regulations while coercive and reward were not significant. This means that, when the students see their lecturers as having the requisite knowledge and skill to teach them, being friendly and found to occupy the job position of a lecturer rightly they comply easily with the lecturer's request. This result is consistent with the studies of Kearney, Plax, Sorensen, & Smith (1988); Roach (1994). Elias & Mace (2005). The result of this study however is at variance with the studies of Aguinis, Nesler, Quigley, Lee & Tedeschi, 1996; Assadi & Amineh (2016). Both Studies indicated high perceptions of their faculty teacher's use of coercive power to gain compliance which had series of negative implications on the members.

The second part of hypothesis one which indicated a significant joint influence of each of the power source on compliance means that, each of the five (5) power sources contributed to influence compliance. The implications of this result is that, it is not a single factor in power source that can positively influence compliance to request but a combination of factors in power sources that combines to bring about compliance.

Hypothesis two indicated a significant difference between male and female students' compliance level based on perceived lecturers' power sources. This means that female students complied better than male students with lecture room instructions, request and regulations due to their lecturer's power source influence. This study is inconsistent with the study of Elias & Mace (2005), their study indicated that power sources (either soft or hard) used for compliance is not impacted by a student's gender. This observed inconsistency may stem from the fact that this power source study was conducted in a hospital (health) environment (Elias, 2004; Elias & Loomis, 2004; Lyness & Thompson, 1997 & Carli, 1999)

Hypothesis three (3) indicated a significant difference in compliance by student's level in the university based on their perceived lecturers' power sources. This present study is consistent with the studies of (Kindsvatter, 1990; Elias & Mace, 2005). Their studies showed that student compliance depends on how long a student is in his or her academic career. Especially, Elias & Mace (2005) found that lower division (level) students attributed their level of compliance to instructions and regulations to the greater use of personal reciprocal knowledge, and authority power. The three sources of power those were significant in influencing students' compliance according to the researchers were however, expert referent and legitimate and the students class levels confirmed studies testing this hypothesis. Furthermore, they concluded that the compliance level of the 200 level students was higher compared to those students in 100 levels.

CONCLUSION

The study indicated that students' perception of their lecturer's expert, rewards, legitimate, coercive, and referent power sources are significantly independent and jointly influenced their level of compliance with classroom instructions and regulations. Also, there is a significant difference between male and female students' compliance to lecture room instructions and assignments based on perceived lecturers' power sources. The study in addition indicated a difference in compliance by student's class level in the university based on their perceived lecturers' power sources.

The implication of this study is that a single power source of a lecturer cannot bring about compliance of students to lecture room instructions, assignments and regulations but a combination of sources, Therefore, the university management should train and develop lecturers to acquire requisite lecturing qualifications, knowledge and skill in social relationships so that they can exercise control during lectures and also gain compliance with request and instructions from the students.

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