Explain the Experiences of Medical Students and Evaluators on Utilizing Simulators in Objective Structured Clinical Exam: A Qualitative Study

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Introduction: Simulation is commonly used in health education, but its role in competency assessment remains underrecognized. This study examined the experiences and perceptions of medical students and evaluators regarding the use of simulators during an objective structured clinical exam (OSCE) to assess clinical competency (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. A medical student examining a virtual patient with COPD

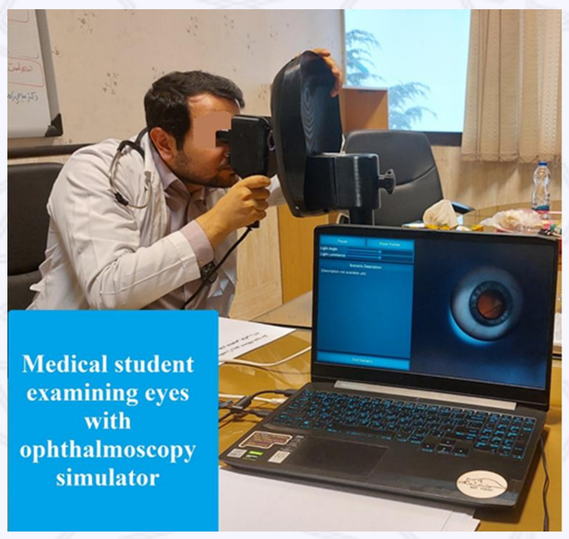


Figure 2. A medical student examining eyes with an ophthalmoscopy simulator

Methods: This qualitative study employed the conventional content analysis approach. Forty-three medical students and two evaluators from Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran, Iran, were recruited through purposive sampling in 2024-25. Data collection involved three focus group interviews (first: 15 students; second: 14 students; third: 14 students), two semi-structured individual interviews, and field notes, with data collection continuing until saturation was achieved. Data analysis was conducted using the method developed by Graneheim and Lundman.

Results: Six main categories were identified (Figure 3):

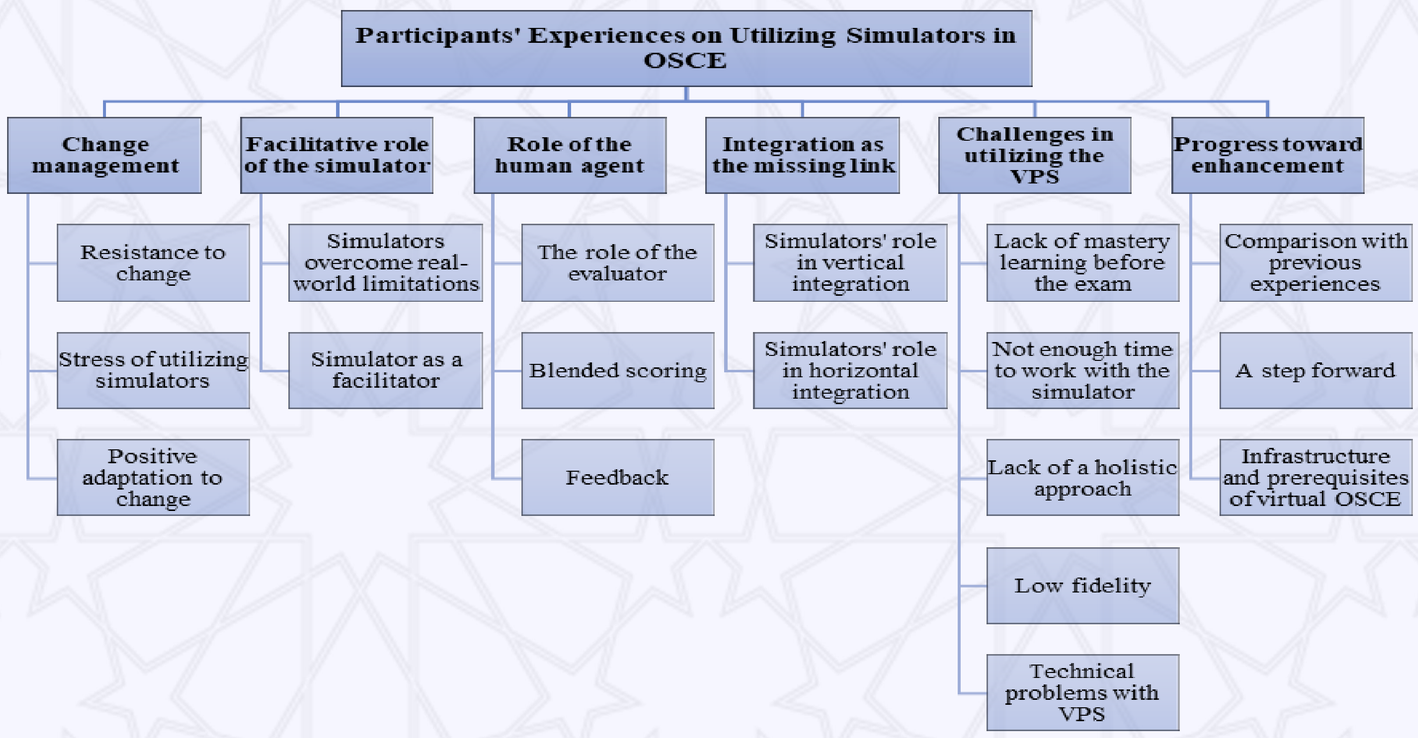


Figure 3. Categories and sub-categories extracted from the data

Conclusion: Although the use of simulators in OSCE is a suitable method for clinical assessment, there are drawbacks in their implementation and training that require special attention. It is recommended that simulation-based assessment be more widely incorporated into the medical education curriculum.