Teachers' Strategies to Build and Maintain Rapport with Students at Department of Medical Biochemical Analysis, Cihan University-Erbil

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Abstract—Building and maintaining rapport between teachers and students and their effect on student's learning outcomes and classroom environment, this research examines which strategies lecturers use to build and maintain rapport with their students at the Medical Biochemical Analysis department at Cihan University-Erbil. Participants (N = 100) answered open-ended survey questions about strategies for rapport building. A total of 12 strategies for building and maintaining rapport include using the whole 1st day, exercising self-disclosure, recognizing students, becoming acquainted with students, being accessible, starting warmly, emphasizing student-centered learning, gathering student feedback, authenticity, listening to students, respecting students, and fairness/being even-handed. Furthermore, ten educators were interviewed to determine the approach they employed to establish and sustain a positive learning atmosphere and achieve successful results. The findings suggest a moderate correlation between educators and learners, with the latter searching for their instructors to exhibit affirmative dispositions to augment their academic achievements.

Keywords—Learning outcomes, Motivation, Positive environment, Rapport building strategies, Rapport.

I. Introduction

Several factors make a motivating, positive, and friendly environment in classes. A good rapport between teachers and their students as well as among the students themselves is one of them. Rapport is considered one of the most important components of teaching. For example, rapport plays a great role in language classes, and it is utilized to enhance and motivate the process of teaching and learning (Catt et al., 2007). This influence might also be reflected in science classes. This is because rapport is a social and psychological phenomenon that refers to an individual's ability to establish a level of trust and mutual understanding with others. In other terms, it is a feeling between two individuals that encompass a mutual, trustworthy, and prosocial tie (Catt et al., 2007 cited in Dyrenforth [2014]). Furthermore, Frisby et al. (2014) assert that the presence of rapport increases a variety of classroom aspects, including motivation, feedback, student learning, and communication. A positive classroom environment fosters a sense of safety for children, where their identity, emotions, and beliefs are acknowledged and respected instead of being dismissed (Frisby et al., 2014; Ramsden, 2003).

However, it is important to note that university instructors may establish rapport with their students differently based on various factors that impact their decisions regarding the boundaries of their relationship with students. According to Hoyt and Lee's (2002) proposal, there are specific fields of study that prioritizes rapport building over others. It is possible that there is a more robust rapport between the instructor and learners in language courses as compared to engineering courses. The variation in classroom discussions between science and social science courses can be attributed to the nature of the subject matter. According to Hoyt and Lee (2002), unlike social sciences, science courses may not always relate directly to the personal experiences of students, which limits the scope of conversations that can be had in class.

Despite the fact that establishing rapport in the classroom plays a crucial role in motivating students to study and resulting in improved performance, it is often overlooked. In contrast, students prefer to build close relationships with their lecturers so that they can learn in a relaxed atmosphere. In other words, they want their teachers to exhibit trust-building behaviors that make it simple for students to ask questions,

engage with others, and participate in teaching and learning activities. (Resham, 2017). Therefore, this study attempts to answer the research questions namely what strategies Medical Biochemical teachers use to build and maintain rapport in the classroom.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an overview of previously conducted studies and literature on the significance of rapport and strategies to build and maintain rapport in the process of learning and teaching.

A. The Importance of Rapport

According to Catt et al. (2007), rapport refers to the general feeling between two individuals that involve a shared, reliable, and positive connection. Rapport is the interpersonal side of teaching; it is what makes the teacher more than just a lecturer. The relationship teachers have with their learners is fundamental to the success of teaching. A positive relationship improves the learning environment and makes teaching significantly more fun for teachers (Lewis and Claridge, 2005). In addition, Williams and Burden (1997) assert that educators possess a significant and enduring impact on their pupils. The educational environment has a significant impact on students' learning outcomes, knowledge acquisition, social interactions, and worldview. Harmer (2007a:32) asserts that establishing a positive rapport with a group can lead to limitless possibilities. The impact of rapport is primarily observed in the classroom setting, where it influences the academic progress and achievements of both students and teachers.

B. Learning Environment and Classroom Management

Fostering a rapport of confidence with learners yields a constructive, cooperative, and encouraging educational setting. In the same vein, fostering a collaborative and courteous learning atmosphere can encourage learners to identify themselves as part of a collective and, as a result, become more receptive to its workings (Anderson, 1999). Moreover, as Harmer (2007b) suggests that it is imperative for educators to establish a suitable rapport with their pupils to cultivate a conducive learning milieu within the confines of the classroom.

C. Student Motivation and Performance

By fostering a positive rapport with learners, it is probable that they will develop a desire to be in the presence of the educator and attend class. According to Walsh and Maffei (1996), this fosters a culture of academic excellence among students, motivating them to achieve mastery of the subject matter and success in the course. In addition, as suggested by Fleming's (2003) research, students tend to comprehend lecture material better, achieve better grades, and exhibit higher satisfaction levels when teachers engage with them in a manner that fosters participation, dedication, and curiosity.

D. The Well-being of the Instructor

Establishing a robust connection with learners can prove to be a fulfilling experience for the educator too. According to Walsh and Maffei (1994), instructors tend to derive greater satisfaction from their classes when they establish positive personal connections with their learners. This, in turn, has a favorable impact on the quality of their pedagogy. In addition, according to Fink's (1984) perspective, establishing a connection with learners is a crucial factor in determining the contentment level of an educator.

E. Rapport-building Strategies

Since the significance of having a positive rapport has been addressed above, it is worth knowing how to establish such a rapport with students. During the initial days of the semester, it is advisable to allocate some time to initiate the process of establishing a rapport with the students. It is crucial to keep in mind Buskist and Saville's findings on rapport, regardless of the actions taken by educators.

Anyone of these actions [exercising self-disclosure, learning students' names, and becoming acquainted with students] alone is unlikely to build rapport. Instead, combinations of these behaviors implemented consistently over time provide the synergistic effects necessary for rapport to emerge in your teaching. (2001:1).

Establishing a strong rapport at the beginning of the semester is crucial in creating a positive classroom environment, leaving a lasting impression, and empowering students to take ownership of their learning. The subsequent sections will showcase the recommendations proposed by the authors.

Use the whole first day

Establishing ground rules at the beginning of the semester sends a clear message to students. Scrivener (2011) suggests that teachers can break the ice with their students as they come into the room by chatting with each one of them, welcoming them, and asking them their names. Therefore, teachers immediately start to learn something about their students. Furthermore, McKeachie (2002) believes that students come to the first class because they want to know what kind of person the teacher is. Moreover, Nilson (2010:45) states that *"what you do and do not do the first day of class will affect your students' and even your expectations and behavior for the rest of the term."*

Exercise self-disclosure

It is advisable for educators to contemplate the idea of disclosing certain aspects of their personal lives to their pupils. As an MA ELT student, it is common for educators to provide a succinct introduction that covers their personal and academic background, including their hometown, family, current school year, college major, as well as their interests and hobbies. According to Wooten-Blanks (2012), it is recommended that educators disclose certain aspects of their personal experiences and challenges encountered during their undergraduate studies. Through this action, the educator exemplifies their humanity and avoids appearing robotic, thereby fostering additional avenues for dialog.

Recognizing students

Learning pupils' names is the simplest way to start building rapport with them (Duffy and Jones, 1995). Moreover, Lowman (1995) asserts that nothing impresses students more than a teacher who makes a concerted effort to get to know them as individuals since memorizing students' names is the most critical factor for teachers to communicate with students. In addition, using students' names, teachers acknowledge them as individuals (Lowman, 1995; Gillespie, 1997; Harmer, 2007a; Scrivener, 2012).

Become acquainted with students

Acquiring a comprehensive comprehension of the individuals present on the opposite end of the lectern is imperative, whether it be through initial greetings or a warm-up exercise. According to Fleming (2003), it is advisable to collect data on students' learning habits outside of school and their learning backgrounds. This information can assist teachers in picking up where previous teachers left off. In addition, administering an expectation quiz to students can provide valuable insights for the instructor regarding their interests, prior knowledge of the subject matter, preferred learning styles, and study habits.

F. Rapport-maintaining Strategies

In the initial stages of the semester, it is crucial to build a strong rapport with the students, and then, it is significant to know how to maintain such a rapport with them. Therefore, the strategies to maintain rapport are discussed below.

Be accessible

It is widely believed among students that they are entitled to access their teachers at a suitable time. According to Fleming (2003), teachers who maintain an open-door policy with their students are often viewed more positively than those who limit access. Moreover, Gillespie (1997) points out that teachers' availability to their students strengthens the relationship between teachers and students. For example, arriving to class 5–10 min early allows teachers to chat with their students or for students to approach teachers about their concerns (Lowman, 1995). Hence, Scrivener (2012:40) suggests that "as far as reasonably possible, build in time and space for learners to talk to you as people."

Start every class meeting off on the right foot

Before commencing the daily instructional sessions, educators may allocate a brief period to establish the atmosphere for the class gathering. According to Morss and Murray's (2005) suggestion, it is advisable to initiate every class session with a cordial salutation, followed by a brief discussion on a current and pertinent topic that relates to the students' lives. This practice can help establish a connection with the students and foster a positive learning environment. This facilitates the process of students acclimating and beginning their concentration on the lesson in a calm manner.

Emphasize student-centered learning

Carson (1996) suggests that teachers should create learning opportunities in the classroom that is full of lively exchanges. For instance, utilize classroom discussions that allow the students to think out answers for themselves or weave applicable examples from the students' lives into the content. Furthermore, Scrivener recommends the following in this regard:

…Start by offering very small choices in discrete points. For example, "Would you like me to explain that again?" or "Shall I write that on the board?" The crucial point is that you go with what they decide (rather than what you think best for them) (2012:111).

Therefore, prioritizing active learning methodologies guarantee student engagement, ultimately strengthening their sense of responsibility toward the course (Carson, 1996).

Gather student feedback

It is advisable for educators to gather feedback from their students around the midpoint of the semester. According to Curzan (2006), granting students a voice can enhance teacher–student rapport. Therefore, it is recommended that educators request that their pupils compose a written reply to 3-4 inquiries concerning their education. For instance, what changes would you like to see in our in-class discussions? How could I make my comments on your papers more helpful for you? or how could our discussions of the readings be made more helpful and relevant to your work? (Curzan and Damour, 2006:200). Furthermore, by allowing students to provide feedback, teachers demonstrate that they truly care about students' learning, improve their plans to suit specific individuals, and gain a better idea of what improvements can be made (Harmer, 2007b; Scrivener, 2005).

Authenticity

Authenticity, according to Scrivener (2012:36), is "behaving in a way that is suitably real, appropriately you, letting the students see something of your true reactions to things, your moods, and your natural behavior, rather than covering everything up with a show." Moreover, according to Gersh (2013), authenticity enables a teacher to respond consciously to unanticipated situations that happen in the classroom, such as when the instructor incorporates his or her experiences or fears in reaction to students' conduct. When a student refuses to finish classwork, for instance, a teacher raises their voice and sends the student out of the classroom. A more conscious approach might be to urge the student to walk to the front of the classroom, where the instructor can assist them more easily while maintaining unconditional positive respect.

Listening to students

Teachers should make themselves available to their students to listen to individual students' opinions and concerns (Harmer, 2007a; Harmer, 2007b). Furthermore, "teachers need to listen to the students' comments on how they are getting on and which activities and techniques they respond well or badly to" (Harmer, 2007b:114). Hence, maintaining rapport becomes more difficult for teachers if they only teach the same thing continually without being aware of their students' reactions (Harmer, 2007a; Harmer, 2007b). Moreover, Harmer (2007a:26) believes that "students respond very well to teachers who listen to them."

Respecting students

It is imperative for educators to establish a classroom atmosphere that fosters a sense of community, inclusivity, and respect. This entails creating a nurturing and supportive environment where all individuals feel valued and appreciated. According to Lumsden (1994), active student participation is enhanced through this approach to learning. In a similar respect, Dörnyei (2001) states:

Teachers who share warm, personal interactions with their students, who respond to their concerns in an empathic manner, and who succeed in establishing relationships of mutual trust and respect with the learners are more likely to inspire them in academic matters than those who have no personalities with the learners. (2001:36).

Moreover, Ramdsen (2003) points out that good teaching means that teachers show great concern and respect for students' personalities (maybe, I guess) and their learning.

Being even-handed

Harmer (2007b) states that teachers need to treat every student in the same way, regardless of who they are. Furthermore, Harmer (2007a:27) points out that students will generally respect teachers who show impartiality and who do their best to reach all the students in a group rather than just concentrating on the ones who "always put their hands up." As one of the students in my research said, "a good teacher should try to draw out the quiet ones and control the more talkative ones," and one of her colleagues echoed this by saying that "a good teacher is... someone who asks the people who don't always put their hands up." Moreover, Harmer (2007b) indicates that treating all students equally helps to establish and maintain rapport and is also a part of a teacher's professionalism.

III. Methodology

This section presents the methodology employed in the study. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, to explore and understand the strategies employed by university lecturers to establish and maintain rapport with students in the Medical Biochemical Analysis Department.

A. Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods design to gather comprehensive insights into the rapport-building strategies adopted by lecturers. The quantitative phase involved administering a questionnaire to 100 university students, while the qualitative phase utilized interviews based on the students' responses. This combination of methods facilitated a deeper understanding of the topic, complementing numerical data with rich qualitative insights.

B. Participants

The study involved a total of 100 university students and 10 university lecturers from the Medical Biochemical Analysis Department at Cihan University-Erbil. The participants were randomly selected, and ethical considerations were meticulously addressed throughout the study. Before data collection, the researchers obtained informed consent from all participants, emphasizing voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, all data collected were treated with confidentiality and anonymity, ensuring the privacy and welfare of the participants. It is worth mentioning that the students were included in this study to validate and support the responses provided by the lecturers. By incorporating the perspectives of both lecturers and students, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the rapport-building strategies employed in the Medical Biochemical Analysis Department.

C. Instruments

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to the 100 university students to gather quantitative data regarding their experiences with lecturers' rapport-building strategies. The questionnaire consisted of items designed to assess various dimensions of rapport, including communication, empathy, approachability, and supportiveness.

The researcher has created the questionnaire for students based on the strategies mentioned in the literature review. The researcher prepared it in two languages, English and Kurdish, which have been reviewed by some professors. The questionnaire comprises 22 statements about strategies for building and maintaining rapport between teachers and students. Students rated these statements on a scale of 1–5 (never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always).

Before the study, the researcher applied this questionnaire to 30 students to know the validity and reliability of the questions as shown in Table I.

To determine the relationship between the questions utilized by the researcher (Correlations Spearman's rho), a (**) indicates that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, while a (*) indicates that it is significant at the 0.05 level. Table II displays the various correlations between these questions. For instance, the negative correlation between questions (X19 and X20 = 0.190) while for some questions, the correlation was modified to positive moderate questions (X8 and X9 = 0.591**), this was not the case for all questions. In addition, the correlation between certain questions is highly positive (X21 and X22 = 0.674**). There is also a positive association between questions such as (X4 and X5 = 0.508**), (X4 and X7 = 0.508**), and (X4 and X13 = 0.500**). In addition, there is a positive, moderate, and high connection between questions such as (X13 with X14 = 0.637**), (X13 with X16 = 0.585**), (X13 with X17 = 0.500**), (X13 with X21 = 0.611**),

TABLE I
Validity and Reliability of the Students' Questions

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.929	0.932	22

and (X13 with X22 = 0.557**). In general, we can observe that the correlation is the lowest between questions (X19 and X20) since they pertain to distinct strategies, but the correlation is the largest between questions (X21 and X22) due to their shared goal of enhancing student learning.

Interviews

The qualitative phase of the study involved conducting interviews with 10 lecturers, which were based on the students' questionnaires. These semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' responses regarding the rapport-building strategies that were claimed to be implemented within their classrooms.

The researcher prepared thirteen questions for interviewing the lecturers. The first question was about building rapport with students in general, and the remaining questions pertained to specific rapport-building strategies (i.e., using the entire 1st day, recognizing students, authenticity, respecting students, listening to students, starting warmly, emphasizing student-centered learning, fairness/being even-handed, exercising self-disclosure, being accessible, gathering student feedback, getting to know students).

D. Data Analysis

Quantitative phase

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Spearman Rho) to determine the relationship between different dimensions of rapport and student perceptions. This statistical analysis provided insights into the quantitative patterns and associations among variables.

Qualitative phase

The interviews conducted with lecturers were transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding. The coding process involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and categories in the lecturers' responses. Through this qualitative analysis, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the strategies implemented by lecturers to build and maintain rapport with students.

By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies used by lecturers to establish and sustain rapport with students in the Medical Biochemical Analysis Department at Cihan University-Erbil. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods allowed for a holistic exploration of the topic, incorporating both numerical trends and rich qualitative insights.

IV. Results

After collecting the data, the researcher employed SPSS statistical analysis to determine the nature of the relationship between teachers and students. In Table III, the questions are grouped according to their relative importance if the result for each question (high-medium) indicates that the relationship between teacher and students is positive, whereas the result of relative importance (medium) indicates that the relationship between teacher and students is moderate.

The Relative Importance Index (RII) is a non-parametric method commonly employed by construction and facilities management researchers to analyze structured questionnaire

TABLE II
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN QUESTIONS

	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	X11	X12	X13	X14	X15	X16	X17	X18	X19	X20	X21	X22
X1	1	.382**	0.164	.232*	.378**	.208*	.263**	.304**	0.161	.400**	0.123	.257**	.267**	.226*	0.177	.219*	.285**	0.191	.236*	.243*	.259**	0.124
X2			.618**	.563**	.434**	.425**	.489**	.445**	.365**	.358**	.335**	.352**	.374**	.291**	.361**	.404**	.425**	0.189	.444**	.215*	.416**	.381**
X3				.607**	.386**	.457**	.491**	.368**	.410**	.203*	.214*	.329**	.526**	.426**	.418**	.402**	.350**	0.163	.479**	0.191	.422**	.390**
X4					.508**	.408**	.508**	.478**	.478**	.419**	.462**	.448**	.500**	.390**	.475**	.492**	.501**	.388**	.399**	.302**	.463**	.373**
X5						.436**	.558**	.501**	.481**	.392**	.474**	.465**	.439**	.256*	.369**	.457**	.372**	.280**	.400**	.330**	.411**	.401**
X6							.340**	.363**	.394**	.401**	.374**	.447**	.325**	.277**	.404**	.371**	.273**	.445**	.307**	.419**	.335**	.467**
X7								.347**	.405**	.320**	.312**	.394**	.473**	.396**	.405**	.458**	.444**	0.129	.566**	0.096	.524**	.334**
X8									.591**	.352**	.538**	.592**	.420**	.209*	.322**	.398**	.383**	.428**	.480**	.366**	.446**	.373**
X9										.464**	.532**	.548**	.593**	.416**	.295**	.457**	.321**	.334**	.428**	.314**	.405**	.606**
X10											.503**	.510**	.319**	.246*	.274**	.323**	.317**	.343**	.208*	.377**	.360**	.381**
X11												.575**	.283**	.216*	.336**	.302**	.289**	.462**	.377**	.291**	.379**	.334**
X12													.629**	.432**	.367**	.553**	.471**	.559**	.428**	.447**	.634**	.506**
X13														.637**	.443**	.585**	.500**	.301**	.486**	.261**	.611**	.557**
X14															.454**	.351**	.371**	.248*	.277**	0.158	.393**	.330**
X15																.460**	.635**	.296**	.488**	.349**	.527**	.382**
X16																	.608**	.358**	.586**	.256*	.564**	.430**
X17																		.448**	.593**	.256*	.555**	.401**
X18																			.251*	.443**	.221*	.250*
X19																				0.190	.613**	.505**
X20																					.454**	.558**
X21																						.674**
X22																						1.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

TABLE III
Relationship Between Teacher and Students

	Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coefficient Variation	Relative Importance index	Relative Importance
X1	My teachers check our assignments.	4%	12%	24%	25%	35%	3.76	1.173	31.20%	0.75	High-Medium
X5	My teachers start lectures warmly and lively on regular basis.	10%	8%	33%	29%	19%	3.42	1.165	34.06%	0.68	High-Medium
X2	Teachers show respect to our contribution (by saying 'Thank you' and 'well done', etc.)	11%	15%	20%	29%	25%	3.39	1.325	39.08%	0.68	High-Medium
X8	My teachers encourage all to speak and participate in discussions.	18%	7%	25%	23%	27%	3.32	1.406	42.36%	0.66	High-Medium
X21	My teachers give instructions about the coursebook at the very beginning of the semester	17%	11%	25%	24%	23%	3.29	1.387	42.17%	0.66	High-Medium
X7	My teachers use different materials to meet students' different learning needs, such as using videos and pictures.	25%	10%	35%	21%	18%	3.17	1.280	40.37%	0.63	High-Medium
X3	I feel like my opinion is taken into consideration in the classroom. For example, when I'm talking to my teachers, they listen to me carefully.	18%	7%	30%	22%	20%	3.17	1.349	42.55%	0.63	High-Medium
X22	My teachers give time to tell us about their module and how we can progress and succeed in the module.	20%	11%	32%	11%	26%	3.13	1.426	45.56%	0.63	High-Medium
X19	My teachers are accessible in their office to talk to once we have questions or problems.	19%	14%	25%	21%	21%	3.12	1.402	44.93%	0.62	High-Medium
X14	My teachers promote gender equality.	24%	15%	22%	15%	24%	2.98	1.491	50.02%	0.60	Medium
X17	My teachers know my name and they call me by name.	22%	23%	32%	14%	19%	2.95	1.373	46.56%	0.59	Medium
X15	I know about my teachers' experiences and achievements, for example, certificates.	15%	19%	32%	23%	11%	2.92	1.212	41.50%	0.58	Medium
X12	My teachers give chances to both weak and clever students.	21%	13%	32%	18%	15%	2.88	1.350	46.89%	0.58	Medium
X13	Module or class instructions are applied to everyone equally.	28%	24%	18%	25%	16%	2.86	1.484	51.89%	0.57	Medium
X9	I feel emotionally safe in the classroom.	19%	19%	34%	13%	15%	2.86	1.311	45.82%	0.57	Medium
X10	My teachers mindfully react to unpredictable situations/ students' behavior. For example, when a student is busy with using their mobile.	24%	19%	26%	15%	16%	2.82	1.388	49.22%	0.56	Medium
X4	My teachers listen to us when we have a problem or haven't done our assignments.	17%	23%	32%	14%	13%	2.80	1.263	45.12%	0.56	Medium
X16	My teachers share some personal information, like difficulties that they faced when they were students.	22%	23%	29%	11%	15%	2.79	1.343	48.14%	0.56	Medium
X20	My teachers care about our learning, for example they ask students to write their feedback about their teaching practices.	26%	16%	28%	16%	14%	2.74	1.353	49.38%	0.55	Medium
X6	My teachers come to the class a bit earlier and chat with us warmly regarding some issues related to our personal lives.	26%	15%	33%	18%	8%	2.68	1.270	47.40%	0.54	Medium
X11	My teachers give time to students to talk/participate in the class without discrimination.	26%	24%	19%	18%	17%	2.68	1.355	50.56%	0.54	Medium
X18	My teachers know about my hobbies, interests, dreams, etc. …	42%	18%	25%	9%	5%	2.16	1.195	55.34%	0.43	Medium
						Overall Average	3.00	0.0917 Std. deviation			

responses for data, including ordinal measurements of attitudes. The RII ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 not being included. It demonstrates that the importance of sustainable criteria increases when RII increases and vice versa as shown in Table IV. Using the transformation matrix proposed by Chen et al. (2010), the comparison between RII and the relevant importance level is measured. According to him, the following in Table V are the deduced importance levels from RII: (Vishal and Gomatesh, 2019).

V. Discussion

All of the lecturers interviewed by the researcher stated that if they had a positive relationship with their students, they would be more involved in the learning process and achieve better academic results. In addition, they noted that a strong relationship increases trust, love, and enjoyment of the lesson. One of the lecturers stated, "Students are also humans. Most of them understand the meaning of respect and love, so if I respect them, they will reciprocate, and I would rather work in a pleasant setting than one where students are shouted at and threatened. I would give a better performance if I had attentive audience members." Another respondent stated, "I have no issues during class because I have an excellent rapport with my students." The researcher intended to identify the tactics employed by teachers in the Medical Biochemical Analysis department. Here, based on student responses to surveys and the lecturer's remarks, we can determine the nature of the teacher–student interaction. The students responded to 22 statements with five scales (never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always), whereas the teachers responded to 13 open-ended questions.

4.1. The statements (X1 and X2) are associated with one of the strategies which are named "Respecting students' in statement (X1), the mean was (3.76), standard deviation was 1.173, and the coefficient variation was 31.20%. Furthermore, the relative importance index is high medium (RII = 0.75). While in the statement (X2), slightly decreased the mean to 3.39, and the standard deviation was 1.325, and high medium

TABLE IV
Importance Level from RII

High (H)	$0.8 < RII < 1.0$
High-Medium (H-M)	$0.6 < RII < 0.8$
Medium (M)	$0.4 < RII < 0.6$
Medium-Low (M-L)	$0.2 < RII < 0.4$
Low (L)	$0.0 < RII < 0.2$
High (H)	$0.8 < RII < 1.0$

TABLE V
Relative Important Indices

Name of Organization	RII	Importance Level
Sanskruti Associates	0.915	High (H)
Sawant Associates	0.763	High to Medium (H-M)
Patil-Bhagwat Developers	0.863	High (H)
Swati Construction	0.873	High (H)

(RII = 0.68). The total mean for both questions is higher than the average which is 3.00.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: How do you react to the students while they give answers or opinions?

Some of the professors make an effort to pay close attention to the students as they provide responses or opinions. Moreover, some others use motivational phrases to participate in the class. In addition, one of the lecturers stated, "I take their views and recommendations into account; I do not make fun of incorrect opinions, and I encourage them to think and provide better suggestions." Furthermore, another lecture showed how to respectfully react to the student's answers, as said: "If they answer well, I would say 'well done'. Sometimes I say "remind me to give you a mark for your activity." But if their answer is wrong, I would say "We will talk about it" so the students wouldn't be disappointed." While some others are only focusing on what they are saying, especially on the right answer.

This result indicates that the majority of teachers treat their students with respect in a variety of ways, including following their students' assignments and valuing their efforts regardless of whether their responses are correct. Comparing questions (X1 and X2) have both high percentages (always = 25% and 35%) and (frequently = 25% and 29%). As several professors have remarked, they are rewarding student engagement using phrases such as "well done," "excellent," and "thank you for your viewpoint." According to the responses of the students, both assertions are of (high-to-moderate) relative importance and interest them more than other statements. As Dornyei (2001) states, teachers who are able to develop relationships of mutual trust and respect with their students are more likely to motivate them in academic subjects than teachers who have no personality connection with their students.

4.2. The statements (X5 and X6) related to one of the strategies named "Start Warmly/Start Every Class Meeting off on the Right Foot." In statement (X5), the mean was 3.42, the standard deviation was 1.165, and the relative importance index (RII) was 0.68. However, in statement (X6), Sharply decreased the mean to (2.68) and the standard deviation to 1.270, and (RII = 0.54).

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: Do you go to class on time? And how do you normally start your lesson?

Said we are on time, except that one of the lecturers would arrive 5–7 min early. The majority of instructors prepare to open their laptops, connect to the projector, and take attendance before beginning a class. Only two instructors stated that before beginning a new lecture, they will greet the students and ensure that they are prepared, as they stated, "I will begin by saying "Good morning, good afternoon," make sure everything is in order, and then begin my lesson. Another professor stated, "Always with a hello and a few pertinent questions."

This result indicates that some lecturers begin their lectures warmly or actively sometimes 33%, while others do so frequently 29% for the statement (X5). Some teachers

stated in the interview that they strive to meet their students and ask them questions, but others stated that they merely prepare and then begin the class. As Morss and Murray (2005) suggest opening each session with a friendly greeting, a comment about something topical and relevant to students' lives, and a few minutes to reconnect with students, it influences the student's ability to relax and concentrate on the subject. The total (mean) for statement (X5) is 3.42 greater than the average, which is 3.00. For statement (X6), the number changed because the majority of lecturers who go to class at the exact time only 33% choose (sometimes) while 26% choose (never), for which the explanation the relative importance index was 0.54 is moderately less significant than the statement's importance (X5). It is demonstrated that students rarely have the opportunity to speak with their lecturers or that there is no communication between teacher and student before the lecture. This is why the total (mean) is 2.58% points below the average 3.00. One of the most crucial aspects of establishing rapport with a student is arriving to class a bit early so that you are aware of what is happening and can converse with them if there is a problem.

4.3. The statements (X7 and X8) related to one of the strategies named "Emphasize student-centered learning." In statement (X7), the mean was 3.17, and the standard deviation was (1.280), and the relative importance index (RII) was 0.63. However, the statement (X8) increased the mean to (3.32) and the standard deviation to 1.406 and (RII) was 0.66. The total mean for both questions is higher than the average, which is 3.00.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: To what extent do you invite your students to participate?

In general, the majority of lecturers attempt to emphasize student-centered classes and their position as facilitators. One of the professors stated, "Throughout the entire presentation, I encourage participation." I must ensure their participation; else, it will be difficult to proceed. While some professors stated, "I give students 5 min to speak and discuss in class, I gave each student 10 min." The sum (mean) for both questions is greater than the average 3.00, indicating that students have a moderate opportunity to speak or ask questions (RII = 0.63 and 0.68 for both assertions) indicates that the relative importance of both questions is high to medium. Not all teachers employ various classroom tools nor are they used at the appropriate time.

4.4. The statement (X21) related to one of the strategies, which is named "The whole first day." In the statement, the mean was 3.29, and the standard deviation was 1.387 and the coefficient variation was 42.17%. Furthermore, the relative importance index (RII) is 0.66. The total mean for the question is higher than the average, which is 3.00.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: What do you usually do in the 1st h of the new academic year in the class?

Regarding this question, they spoke primarily about module descriptors, which outline the subject's goals and objectives and provide basic context for each week of study during the semester. Alternately, some instructors believe that, at the

beginning of the academic year, it is important to introduce yourself and ask the students' names, especially if you are teaching them for the first time, then provide guidance and class rules, and finally explain the module descriptor in detail to all students. The 1st day of school is crucial for students because it reveals their personalities (McKeachie, 2002). Furthermore, Nilson (2010:45) writes, "What you do or do not do on the 1st day of class will affect your students' and your own expectations and conduct throughout the remainder of the semester."

This result indicates that, in general, the majority of lecturers provide students with detailed instructions, module descriptions, and classroom regulations. In addition, the majority of students' responses are (often) and (always).

4.5. The statements (X3 and X4) related to one of the strategies, which is named "Listening to students." In statement (X3), the mean was (3.17), the standard deviation was 1.349, and the coefficient variation was 42.55%. Furthermore, the relative importance index is high medium (RII) 0.63. In the statement (X4), the mean was 2.80, the standard deviation was 1.263, and the coefficient variation was 45.12%, but the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.56).

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: What would you do if some students had complaints about your lecture, your style of teaching, or any other relevant issues?

When a student does not fully grasp a concept, all of the professors I interviewed will alter their teaching methods. One of the professors stated, "I will first listen to their feedback without taking it personally, and then I may try with alternative methods of communication." And another instructor stated:"It has not yet occurred, but if it does, I will assess their English proficiency and ask intermediate students if they have the same issue to determine the scope of the issue". "If every student had an issue, I would modify my teaching method. If all the students have a problem, I will evaluate the issue and adjust my teaching technique" stated another.

According to student responses, only 30% selected (sometimes), (often = 22%), and (20%) selected (always), which is relevant to the issue posed (3). Furthermore, teachers indicated that if they do not comprehend the lecture, we will adjust our style, which is why the mean is higher than the average for this question (3.00). However, they did not mention other pertinent issues, such as if students have a problem or have not completed their assignment, which is related to question number (X4); only 32% of students mentioned that their teachers listen to them when they have a problem or, for whatever reason, are unable to complete the assignment. According to to Harmer (2007), it is more challenging for teachers to establish rapport if they constantly teach the same material without monitoring their students' responses. This is the reason why the total (mean) for this question is lower than the average of 2.80.

4.6. The statement (X22) related to one of the strategies, which is named "Become acquainted with students." In

statement (X22), the mean was (3.13), the standard deviation was 1.426, and the coefficient variation was 45.56%. Furthermore, the relative importance index is high-medium (RII) 0.63. The total mean for this question is higher than the average, which is 3.00.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: How do you know that your students are interested in your lesson?

Each instructor had a unique point of view; one of them stated that I know my students who were engaged in the lecture when I observe them taking notes, participating in the lecture, and asking questions on the same lecture, as well as completing the assignment on time. Others stated that "they pay close attention when I am speaking or explaining the lesson, ask numerous questions, and achieve a high exam score." In addition, a second professor stated that "students express their appreciation for the course in class or provide feedback to the head of department." In addition, one of the instructors brought up two crucial things, including: "They say that and We adore your topic." While challenging, you simplify it with illustrations, explanations, and clear examples, and "the low number of student absences is a positive indicator." This conclusion demonstrates that there are two types of professors: those who care about how students learn and how to adjust their teaching methods to different subjects, and those who are less familiar with their students. For this question, only 26% agree with "always," while 32% agree with "sometimes," resulting in a high-to-medium RII of 0.63.

4.7. The statement (X19) related to one of the strategies, which is named "Being Accessible." In the statement, the mean was 3.12, the standard deviation was 1.402, and the coefficient variation was 44.93%. Furthermore, the relative importance index is high-medium (RII) 0.62. The total mean for this question is higher than the average, which is 3.00.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: Do you prefer meeting your students after the class if they have a question or a problem? If yes, how often?

Some of them said yes, while others responded occasionally yes. And they said that I always tell my students that if they have any questions or problems they can come to my office, as they said: "always telling them if they want anything, they can come to me after class; if they have trouble understanding or any other problem, they can come to me always', and "I am there to help." As I always say "feel free to come to my office." Otherwise, they stated, "depending on the query or problem kind."

If we examine the students' performance, we might determine that professors are not always available to answer students' queries and listen to their difficulties. In this case, it depends on the personality and workload of the teacher. Due to the close proximity of the rates: (Never = 19), (Rarely = 14%), (Sometimes = 25%), (Often = 21%), and (Always = 21%). Consequently, RII = 0.62 dropped in comparison to other questions.

4.8. The statements (X12, X13, and X14) related to one of the strategies, which is named "Fairness/Being even-

handed." In statement (X12), the mean was 2.88, the standard deviation was 1.350, and the coefficient variation was 46.89%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII) 0.58. Furthermore, (X13), the mean was 2.86, the standard deviation was (1.484), and the coefficient variation was 51.89%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII) was 0.57. Moreover, in the statement (X14), the mean was 2.98, the standard deviation was 1.491, and the coefficient variation was 50.02% and the relative importance index was medium (RII) 0.60.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: How do you deal with "weaker students" and "dominant students" in the classes?

In general, all they suggested were that we should focus on the weaker students until they reach the level of the dominant kids, making it simpler for them using simple phrases or instances or by providing additional examples. They stated, "I will explain more to the weaker students, such as by teaching it twice or in a more straightforward manner. For dominating students, always encourage them by saying good and very good, while another professor added, "For weaker students, I use basic words in English, and if they don't understand, I'll use a new example, so that the clever group won't become bored and the weaker group would comprehend. While I am reviewing at the beginning of class, dominating students have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and earn points."

Regarding student questions, there are a variety of questions pertaining to fairness. In question number (X12), offering a chance to both weaker and intelligent students is medium since 32% choose it occasionally. As a result, the total (mean) for this question is less than the average, which is 3.00. Similarly, the mean for question (X13) is less than the average, which is 3.00. Regarding applying module and class directions equally to all students, 28% of students selected never, 25% selected often, and 24% selected rarely. Therefore, RII = 0.57 is moderate. In addition, the third question (X14) about differences between the genders has a similar number of responses for never and always 24%, and the mean is lower than the average for the same questions 3.00. In conclusion, the majority of lecturers indicated during interviews that they focus on weaker students to help them improve and encourage them to study more. However, the majority of students believed that their teachers discriminated based on gender or did not enforce their regulations equally.

4.9. The statements (X9 and X10) related to one of the strategies, which is named authenticity. In the statement (X9), the mean was 2.86, the standard deviation was 1.311, and the coefficient variation was 45.82%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.57). Furthermore, (X10) the mean was 2.82, the standard deviation was 1.388, and the coefficient variation was 49.22%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.56). For both questions, the mean is lower than the average, which is 3.00.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: If there was an unpleasant incident in the class, how would you react in that situation?

To maintain the lecture, they strive primarily to maintain composure and respond to this circumstance with wisdom and

care. And some professors said that in this situation, I should try to discuss the issue with the student in private or try to find a solution so that it does not occur again. One of the lecturers said, "I will begin advising and providing examples for better ways of thinking that produce good acts rather than bad ones; perhaps I will give such students my trust in order to change their attitudes; however, I have had many positive results," while another said, "I will inform the head of the department," and a third said, "I will return to the university's rules to resolve the incident." As a result of students' questions and interviews with lecturers, it has been determined that the number of teachers who are able to adapt to unanticipated situations or inappropriate classroom behavior is between 34 and 26%. In addition, it depends on the teachers' personalities, circumstances, and experiences. Some of the teachers maintain composure and behave in an appropriate manner, while others lose control and reply quickly. The relative importance index is moderate for both questions. According to Gersh (2013), teachers must respond consciously to unanticipated events that happen in the classroom, involving their own experiences or fears in reaction to student behavior.

4.10. The statements (X17 and X18) related to one of the strategies, which is named "Recognizing students." In the statement (X17), the mean was 2.95, the standard deviation was 1.373, and the coefficient variation was 46.56%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.59). Furthermore, (X18) the mean was 2.16, the standard deviation was 1.195, and the coefficient variation was 55.34%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.43). For both questions, the mean is lower than the average, which is 3.00.

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: Do you think learning students' names is essential? Are you good at learning students' names? How long does it take for you to learn and remember your students' names?

About learning students' names, they answered in different ways like "yes, it is essential," "sometimes," and "not bad." Mostly they said I'm good for learning student names, which take 3 weeks to 1 month, while only two of them answered that it takes a long time to learn student names. The differences between these periods are because of age, the attention of the lecturer, and how interested they were in learning their names. Furthermore, because of the different culture, for some lecturer, it takes time to learn how to pronounce the name and uses their names; as one of them said, "I am good, but pronunciation of Kurdish names for girls is difficult. It depends; sometimes in the first session I would learn because they talked to me, asked me question, or their performance was very weak. I can say 2 months with 250 students."

In this comment, we can see that they can easier learn the students' names when the students talk, ask questions, or more actively participate in the class or activity. It indicates that they can remember those students who are more active in the class.

All the lecturers focused on only one side of recognizing students: learning students names. Some are good at learning students' names, while for others, it takes time. We can see in the students responses (Sometimes = 32) to question

(X17) that their teachers use their name or call them by name. However, the other side of recognizing students is knowing their backgrounds, for example, their interests, hobbies, dreams, skills, etc., as mentioned in question number 18. Most of the lecturers do not care about this side; in the student result (Never = 42), students answered for this section. For that reason, the RII (medium) for this question is lower than all other questions, which means less importance.

4.11. The statements (X15 and X16) related to one of the strategies, which are named "Exercise self-disclosure." In the statement (X15), the mean was 2.92, the standard deviation was 1.212, and the coefficient variation was 41.50%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.58). Furthermore, in X16, the mean was 2.79, the standard deviation was 1.343, and the coefficient variation was 48.14%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.56).

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: Do your students know about your experiences or achievements?

Most of the lecturers did not talk about their experiences or what they achieved; rarely, they did talk with them in detail. For example, they said "to some extent," "it does not need," "not that much," and "sometimes I will talk." In the result of student's questions and interviews with lecturers, we can see that, in general, students do not know much about their teachers' experiences if they know little, which is related to the personality of the teacher. In both questions, the highest number was sometimes 32% for question (X15) and sometimes 29% for question (X16). Moreover, RII = 0.56 for question (16) is slightly decreased compared with question (15), which is (0.58).

4.12. The statement (X20) related to one of the strategies, which is named "Gather student feedback." In the statement (X20), the mean was 2.74, the standard deviation was 1.353, and the coefficient variation was 49.38%, and the relative importance index was medium (RII = 0.55).

One of the questions that the researcher asked the lecturers during the interview was: How do you check your students' understanding or learning?

To determine whether or not students comprehend, instructors employ a variety of assessments. Some lecturers are being evaluated by asking questions at various points, such as throughout the presentation and at its conclusion. Moreover, some others, such as short quizzes, may be administered orally or in writing.

Medium was the student's response to this question, with the greatest number being 28 and the lowest being 26. There is a lack of understanding between teachers and students, as some teachers are skilled at assessing student learning while others, due to time or student numbers, are unable to do so. This question's (mean) is less than the average 3.00. Likewise, the (RII) 0.55 is middling based on student results.

VI. Conclusion

This study examined the strategies employed by university lecturers to build and maintain rapport with students in

the Medical Biochemical Analysis Department at Cihan University-Erbil. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, a comprehensive understanding of the topic was achieved. The relationship between teachers and students in the Medical Biochemical Analysis Department is medium. According to the results, the majority of teachers are respectful of students' views and perspectives, while others aim to encourage all students to participate equally in class. Furthermore, some teachers are aware of what is occurring in the classroom and the emotions or problems of the kids. In addition, the majority of students are interested in how their lecturers interact with them and explain their lectures. However, some students wish for a teacher to be available in the office so that if they have a problem or query, they may go to the teacher's office, and some want their professors to arrive a bit earlier and begin class in a variety of ways. In addition, they expect their teachers to execute their rules and directions uniformly and without bias toward all students.

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