

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Preference & perception of undergraduate medical aspirants of Kashmir towards different professional medical careers

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The choice of career is a critical discussion that has an obvious impact on future life pattern. Wrong choice causes a decrease in a country's scientific level, waste of human and economic resources, incuriosity, and lack of student motivation toward social issues and mental disorders in the student's personal and social life. Hence present study was conducted to evaluate the preference of career choice and motivational factors affecting the preferences of choosing different medical careers of undergraduate medical students preparing for Common entrance examinations after intermediate level examinations. **Materials and Methods:** The present study is a questionnaire-based cross-sectional survey. A closed ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire includes socio demographic details, in addition students will be asked to select their first career choice and related questions. The data were compiled and tabulated in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and were subjected to descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS) 21.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Assessments of reasons for choosing preferred medical field according to gender of medical aspirants were done using Chi-square analysis. Any $P \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant. **Results:** A total of 368 participants completed the entire questionnaire and were include in the study. In the study, 41.84% opted Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.Sc. Nursing) for future medical careers other than MBBS while 23.09% opted Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS). The reasons found for choosing preferred medical field according to gender of participants were found to be significant in relation to influence of family/peer pressure/friends for above chosen specialty, high income potential, stable and secure future, good Reputation, better lifestyle/prestige and good job opportunities in abroad ($p \leq 0.001$). **Conclusion:** According to the present study results, other than MBBS, majority of students chose Bachelor of science in Nursing (B.Sc. Nursing) as a carrier option as compared to Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS). Even though the reason for choosing the students preferred carrier includes high income potential, stable and secure future, good reputation, better lifestyle/prestige, good job opportunities in abroad; the influence of family/peer pressure/friends for choosing their specialty is an important factor because this may have a negative impact on students future.

Keywords: Carrier, Medical Aspirants, Perception, Profession, Students

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INTRODUCTION

'Destiny is decided'! No doubt about it but the almighty has given us wisdom and knowledge to share and apply in a particular circumstance. One such difficult circumstance in this race of uncertain life (as we perceive) is choosing a career. Career is one of the most important decisions one will ever make. This is very true if one does not have the knowledge and solution to a particular circumstance in front of them, invariably increasing the level of uncertainty. Many factors may enter into deciding on a career choice. These include factors related to working conditions and financial rewards, security and status, nature of

occupation, working with people, use of personal or manual skills, and interest in science and research.^[1]

Some career options are often overlooked by students. It has been suggested that an understanding of factors that influence career decisions may help in workforce planning, avoiding over- or under-supply of doctors in different specialties.^[2,3] Factors that have been suggested to play a role include the characteristics of the medical college, lifestyle preferences, prestige, job opportunities, expected income, longitudinal care, preclinical and clinical experiences, and role models.^[4]

Whether one chooses a specific specialty due to advice from friends or family, admiration of a certain mentor, or genuine interest in the specialty, there are several incentives and factors that converge to result in the final decision.^[5] While motivations do vary according to specialties, they may include lifestyle choices, a possibility of private practice an interest in specific diseases, a varied scope of practice, an interest in research and teaching, or to gain a higher income.^[6] Hence, choosing a field of study becomes elementary, for a wrong choice causes a decrease in a country's scientific level, waste of human and economic resources, incuriosity, and lack of student motivation toward social issues and mental disorders in the student's personal and social life.^[7]

Students' motivations for choosing a career in the health professions are of great interest for educators and admission committees. Students' motivations for entering medical sciences, as well schools' requirements and selection processes, vary considerably between countries and even within a single country.^[8] In general, parents, relatives, friends, teachers, and counsellors affect the student's decision. The choice of career is a critical discussion that has an obvious impact on future life pattern. It is reported to be associated with positive as well as harmful psychological, physical and socio-economic inequalities that persist well beyond the youthful age in to an individual's adult life.^[9] Hence present study was conducted to evaluate the preference of career choice and motivational factors affecting the preferences of choosing different medical careers of undergraduate medical students preparing for Common entrance examinations after intermediate level examinations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is a questionnaire-based cross-sectional survey conducted by Department of Public Health Dentistry Government Dental College, Srinagar. The ethical clearance for the study was

obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the dental college.

DATA COLLECTION

A closed ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire has been modified for the Indian context from similar questionnaires available in the literature.^[10] For content validity, it was pretested on 10 volunteer medical students, and 2 faculty members; they commented on the relevance and unambiguity of items. It was modified into its final form on the basis of their feedback. The study was conducted on medical aspirants studying in some career tuitioncentres/ coaching classes across Kashmir region. The available volunteers were requested to fill the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary and applied only to the students who were present in class on that day. A written consent was taken from each participant prior to filling of questionnaire.

The questionnaire includes sociodemographic details; in addition, students will be asked to select their first career choice and related questions.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data were compiled and tabulated in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and were subjected to descriptive analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS) 21.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Assessment of reasons for choosing preferred medical field according to gender of medical aspirants were done using Chi-square analysis. Any $P \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

A total of 368 participants completed the entire questionnaire and were include in the study. Demographic details of the participants are illustrated in table 1. According to the study results, 58.15% participants never visited a dentist and among the visited participants, 42.2% had a good experience and 52.6% had fair experience with the dental clinic.

Table 1: Demographic details

Demographic details		N (%)
Gender	Male	171 (46.46%)
	Female	197 (53.53%)
High school categorization	Government School Pass out	141 (38.31%)
	Private/Public School Pass out	227 (61.68%)
Have you got any relatives in medical profession	Yes	167(45.38%)
	No	201(54.61%)
Have you got any relatives in dental profession	Yes	97 (26.35%)
	No	271 (73.64%)
How many times have you visited a dentist?	Never visited	214 (58.15%)
	1 – 5 visits	152 (41.3%)
	6-10 visits	2 (0.54%)
	More than 10 visits	0
If "yes" how was your experience at the dental clinic?	Good	65 (42.2%)
	Fair	81 (52.6%)
	Poor	8 (5.2%)

In the study, among 368 students, 41.84% opted Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.Sc. Nursing) for future medical careers other than MBBS while 23.09% opted Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS). Table 2 illustrated the Preference for future medical careers other than MBBS among the medical aspirants.

Table 2: First Preference for future medical careers other than MBBS

First Preference for future medical careers other than MBBS	N (%)
Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS)	85 (23.09%)
Bachelors in pharmacy (B.Pharma)	38 (10.32%)
Bachelor of science in Nursing (B.Sc. Nursing)	154 (41.84%)
Bachelors in veterinary sciences (BVSC)	32 (8.69%)
Bachelors in Unani Medicine (BUMS)	1(0.27%)
Bachelors in Ayurvedic medicine (BAMS)	43(11.68%)
Bachelors of homeopathic Medicine (BHMS)	8 (2.17%)
Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPT)	7 (1.90%)

The reasons found for choosing preferred medical field according to gender of participants were found to be significant in relation to influence of family/peer pressure/friends for above chosen specialty, high income potential, stable and secure future, good Reputation, better lifestyle/prestige and good job opportunities in abroad ($p \leq 0.001$). Table 3 describes the reasons for choosing preferred medical field.

Table 3: Reasons for choosing preferred medical field according to gender of participants

S.No	Question	Female		Male		P value
		Yes	No	Yes	No	
1.	I am personally interest in the above chosen specialty.	76.6% (151)	23.4% (46)	83.6% (143)	16.4% (28)	0.117
2.	I have personal interest for surgical practices	77.7% (153)	22.3% (44)	84.2% (144)	15.8% (27)	0.112
3.	Influence of family/peer pressure/friends for above chosen specialty	89.8% (177)	10.2% (20)	74.3% (127)	25.7% (44)	0.001*
4.	Influence of a role model/teacher for above chosen specialty	79.7% (157)	20.3% (40)	18.1% (31)	81.9% (140)	0.691
5.	My chosen specialty has high income potential	79.7% (157)	20.3% (40)	98.8% (169)	1.2% (2)	0.001*
6.	My chosen specialty offers stable and secure future	87.3% (172)	12.7% (25)	96.5% (165)	3.5% (6)	0.002*
7.	My chosen specialty has a good Reputation	73.1% (144)	26.9% (53)	94.2% (161)	5.8% (10)	0.001*
8.	The specialty offers better lifestyle/prestige	73.1% (144)	26.9% (53)	94.2% (161)	5.8% (10)	0.001*
9.	The specialty has good career progression	87.8% (173)	12.2% (24)	84.8% (145)	15.2% (26)	0.447
10.	The specialty offers scope of self practice	77.7% (153)	22.3% (44)	84.2% (144)	15.8% (27)	0.112
11.	My chosen specialty offers good job opportunities in abroad.	88.3% (174)	11.7% (23)	98.8% (169)	1.2% (2)	0.001*
12.	This specialty gives professional independence.	28.4% (56)	71.6% (141)	29.2% (50)	70.8% (121)	0.864
13.	This specialty has good options for further training/ research opportunities.	87.8% (173)	12.2% (24)	95.9% (164)	4.1% (7)	0.008
14.	This specialty offers less work pressure, workload flexibility/predictability	28.4% (56)	71.6% (141)	29.2% (50)	70.8% (121)	0.864
15.	This specialty has acceptable hours of practice.	89.3% (176)	10.7% (21)	89.5% (153)	10.5% (18)	1.000
16.	Specialty offers good job opportunities in private/Govt. hospitals.	92.4% (182)	7.6% (15)	89.5% (153)	10.5% (18)	0.364

17.	Focus on patients in the community.	88.8% (175)	11.2% (22)	85.4% (146)	14.6% (25)	0.350
18.	Specialty provides better teaching opportunities	91.9% (181)	8.1% (16)	88.9% (152)	11.1% (19)	0.375

Table 4 shows the reason for not preferring bachelors of Dental Surgery (BDS) as a professional career. Among the 283 students who didn't opt BDS, most common reason given was Expensive private clinical setup (32.15%) followed by Family pressure not to opt (27.20%).

Table 4: Reason for not preferring bachelors of Dental Surgery (BDS) as a professional career

Reason for not preferring bachelors of Dental Surgery (BDS) as a professional career	N (%) 283
High fee structure	72 (25.44%)
Less job satisfaction/opportunities	68 (24.02%)
Less monetary benefits.	63 (22.26%)
Family pressure not to opt	77 (27.20%)
Prone to infectious diseases /contamination.	35 (12.36%)
Expensive private clinical setup.	91 (32.15%)

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted with an aim to evaluate the preference of career choice and motivational factors affecting the preferences of choosing different medical careers of undergraduate medical students preparing for Common entrance examinations after intermediate level examinations.

In this study majority (53.53%) were females and were Private/Public School Pass out (61.68%). 58.15% participants in the present study never visited a dentist and among the visited participants, 42.2% had a good experience and 52.6% had fair experience with the dental clinic. In a study done by Shree N et al [11] among high school students, nearly 62.9% of students have never visited a dentist.

In the present study majority (41.84%) chose B.Sc. Nursing as their first Preference for future medical careers other than MBBS while 23.09% opted BDS. According to the study by Al-Bitar ZB et al, [1] two hundred and twenty one students (46%) had dentistry as a first choice.

According to our study results, 76.6% females and 83.6% males were personally interested in their chosen speciality while 77.7% females and 84.2% males were interested for surgical practices. In a study by Lefèvre JH et al, [5] about 34% medical students expressed their desire to follow a surgical career.

High income was the reason of choosing the speciality for about 79.7% females and 98.8% males in our study. These results were in agreement with a study by Al-Bitar ZB et al, [1] in which there were slight differences in the motivation for selecting carrier between male and females with males more motivated by financial factors.

The reasons found for choosing preferred medical field according to gender of the present study participants were found to be significant in relation to influence of family/peer pressure/friends for above chosen speciality, high income potential, stable and secure future, good Reputation, better lifestyle/prestige and good job opportunities in abroad ($p \leq 0.001$). In a study by Griffin B et al [12] among medical students, there was a significant relationship

found between parent expectations and regret for choosing medical field. Another study conducted by Mohi Ud Din et al, [13] most of medical students stated that their parents choose career path for them while 1/4th of participants revealed that their parents forced them in choosing their career path.

Among the 283 students in our study who didn't opt BDS, most common reason given was Expensive private clinical setup (32.15%) followed by Family pressure not to opt (27.20%). Many researches showed that even BDS students are not satisfied with their profession. [14] A study conducted by Kannan Ret al [14] stated that 14.1% of the dental students wanted to change career after BDS.

There are no proper previous studies available on the perception of medical aspirants towards different professional medical careers and this is one of the major strength of our study

Our study had a smaller sample size so results can't be generalised and so further studies are necessary. Another limitation of this study is that being a questionnaire based study it can be susceptible to acquiescence bias and social desirability bias.

CONCLUSION

According to the present study results, other than MBBS, majority of students chose Bachelor of science in Nursing (B.Sc. Nursing) as a carrier option as compared to Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS). Even though the reason for choosing the students preferred carrier includes high income potential, stable and secure future, good reputation, better lifestyle/prestige, good job opportunities in abroad; the influence of family/peer pressure/friends for choosing their speciality is an important factor because this may have a negative impact on students future. Hence it is suggested that there is a need for proper carrier guidance and counselling not only for students but also for their parents.

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