

# Medical Students' Perception About Medical Profession In A Public Sector Medical College: A Cross Sectional Study

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To assess the perception of medical students regarding medical profession in Pakistan.

**Study Design:** Cross sectional study.

**Place and Duration:** Department of Physiology, D.G.Khan Medical College, Dera Ghazi Khan. During January to March 2014.

**Material and Methods:** A cross, sectional study was conducted at DGKMC Dera Ghazi Khan Simple Random sampling technique was applied.

**Results:** The 68.68% students were satisfied about their choice of medical profession. Majority (94.22%) of students reported that medical studies are highly stressful and they feel overburdened all the time. Most of students (79.78%) are willing to work as a doctor & with in Pakistan and want to serve the nation after graduation.

**Discussion:** Doctor as a career selection is affected by multiple factors, which include, parent choice, student aptitude, doctors' life style, financial benefits and respect of profession in society.

**Conclusion:** Medical studies are challenging. Career selection and counseling should be provided in the institutions.

**Key Words:** Medical profession, Medical students, Carrier counseling

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, our chief concern is to promote professional behavior among medical students. The concept of Professionalism is to serve as foundation to assess professional behavior. The best available tool of assessment for profession is its financial benefits<sup>1</sup>. Medical students' interest in Primary health care has decreased despite increased opportunities and special rural area incentives provided by the government<sup>2</sup>. There is

no single variable which determine the career selection but monetary benefit may influence career choice<sup>3</sup>. The decision regarding choice of medical profession is complicated and depends upon multiple variables like life style, salary, working environment and respect in the society. Medical profession is to work under challenging situations, along with continuous stress and studies for personal growth and well being<sup>4</sup>.

Many studies reported the correlation among stress perception and several factors like gender, living environment, academic burden, stressful working environment. Medical education is overburden today; adversely affecting mental health, with high frequency of stress, anxiety, depression, neurosis among medical students<sup>5,6</sup>. Environmental factors also aggravate the stress situation. While distinction between distress response and environmental stressor is difficult<sup>7</sup>. Medical education is demanding preclinical and clinical requirements and over burden academics, which results in working hour's extension with

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night duties and weekend's duties. Typical stress sources in medical education are frequent internal examinations, examination phobia, less recreational time, specified types of procedures, time limits, and lack of self confidence<sup>8,9</sup>.

General Medical Council (GMC) of London has directed medical institutions to have career guidance and planning centers, like generic career skill resources, future career in medicine<sup>10</sup>. Good career decisions are part and parcel of ROADS, i.e., R- Realistic, are you being realistic about yourself and job demands, O- Opportunities. Have you considered all opportunities available? A- Anchors. Have you built in things that support you in life? D- Development. Do your choices fully develop your potential? S- Stress. Have you considered stress aspect of your work place<sup>11</sup>.

Medical studies has structured under graduate and post graduate training programs. Medical students have no future career choices until they have many years of experience after graduation. Planning, informed career choice and, better career guidance result in good choice with less time spent after graduation<sup>12</sup>.

Morra et al in the year 2009 reported that a perception of remuneration of physician, and effect of financial debt on medical student for medical education might affect career selection<sup>13</sup>.

## MATERIAL & METHODS:

A cross-sectional study was conducted in the department of Physiology, D.G.Khan Medical College Dera Ghazi Khan. Participants were under graduate medical students. The study was conducted during January to March 2014.

Study objective was to know the perception of medical students regarding medical profession in Pakistan. Simple random sampling technique was used. Student perception was assessed by a questionnaire having six questions regarding medical profession. Out of 380 students who were enrolled in the study, 277 students submitted the questionnaire & participated in the study.

Questions were; No.1. Do you feel your choice of medical profession was right?  
No.2. Do you feel overburdened by your studies?

No.3. Do you want to practice as a doctor after completing studies?

No.4. Where you want to practice after completing your studies? Pakistan/Abroad

No.5. Where you will prefer to work? Government sector/Private sector

No.6. Do you want your younger brother or sister to adopt this profession?

## RESULTS:

In this study 277 students responded the questionnaire, 105(37.91%) were boys and 172(62.09%) were girls (Table 01).

Most of the students (68.68%) said that their career selection choice is right. While 94.22% student claimed that they are overstressed and overburdened with studies. Majority of student (96.39%) liked to practice as doctor after completing studies. (Table 02)

Medical students are enthusiastic to serve the nation. Majority (79.78%) will like to practice within Pakistan. Most of (85.20%) are in favor to work in government sector health care system. Majority of (62.09%) like that their young brother/sister should also choose the medical profession as a career (Table 02).

Table-1: Data Analysis

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	38	58	96
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	37	50	87
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	25	42	67
4 <sup>th</sup> Year	5	22	27
Total	105	172	277
Percentage	37.9	62.09	100

## DISCUSSION:

Medical education is highly demanding, stressful learning, in challenging environment. Medical students require to attain theoretical knowledge, clinical experience and interpersonal skills.<sup>6-8</sup> Many researchers reported high level of psychiatric illnesses among students acquiring higher education.<sup>14</sup> In our study 94% of students admitted that they feel over burdened by their studies. Our finding is in accordance with previous studies regarding higher education<sup>15</sup>.



Table-2

Class	Q. No. 1 Respondents		Q. No. 2 Respondents		Q. No. 3 Respondents		Q. No. 4 Respondents		Q. No. 5 Respondents		Q. No. 6 Respondents	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Pakistan	Abroad	Govt. Sector	Private	Yes	No
1 <sup>st</sup> Year	79	17	94	29	2	4	75	21	86	10	55	41
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	49	38	77	10	87	0	72	15	75	12	57	30
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	51	16	64	3	62	5	52	15	56	11	42	25
4 <sup>th</sup> Year	14	13	26	1	26	1	22	5	19	8	18	9
Total	193	84	261	16	267	10	221	56	236	41	172	105
Percentage	68.68	30.32	94.22	5.78	96.39	3.61	79.78	20.22	85.20	14.80	62.09	37.91

Carrier selection is affected by many factors like future financial outlook and respect in the society. Morra et al (2009) reported that career decision making is affected by financial factors. Future earning expectation is important determinant for career selection<sup>16</sup>

In our study 68.68% of students were satisfied with their choice of medical profession and they (62%) would like to recommend medical profession to their younger brother and sister. Future income prospects and social status of doctors in Pakistan are considered to be very high. Our 96.4% respondents showed willingness to practice as a doctor after graduation. Majority (79.7%) of them preferred to serve the nation locally. About 20% of medical students were willing to serve ailing humanity among the global health work force.

More than 85% of respondents preferred to work in the public sector health institutions. Only about 15% chose to work in the private sector health institutions. This finding is because of sense of job security in public sector as compared with the private sector. Legislation is required to provide job security in the private sector so that the doctors can select the private sector as their preferred work environment<sup>17-18</sup>.

In Pakistan medical education is far less expensive as compared with developed countries. There are multiple support facilities available to the students in the form of scholarships, interest free loans, fee remission and provision of textbooks from libraries. So the financial burden of studies is minimal, and the future income

expectations are very high<sup>19</sup>.

Modern concept of professionalism in medical education is clearly circumscribed and specified elements like reliability and responsibility, honesty and integrity, respect for others, critique, altruism, interpersonal skills and no psychological impairment are well recognized. Professional organizations like American Board of Internal Medicine, the Society of Academic Emergency Medicine and Accreditations has also endorsed the above elements of professionalism.<sup>20</sup>

Colquitt et al, documented that 15-20 % of students met the criteria for diagnosis of psychiatric illnesses and high prevalence is reported among girl students<sup>21</sup>. Our findings are in accordance with Pimparyon et al, Mayya et al and Makee et al, who reported that students who fail in internal examinations or University examinations have higher level of psychiatric problem, while in our study 94% dependents claimed that medical education is over burdening and more stress full today due to recent advances in the field of medicine<sup>9,22,23</sup>.

It has been reported that medical students had vast syllabus and lack of time for assignments which results in difficulty and stress for their time management<sup>24</sup>.

#### LIMITATIONS:

There are two limitations in our study; the first is that the study was conducted at only one medical college of South Punjab so generalization of data may be limited. The second is that 50% students were studying at preclinical level and



50% students were attending indoor/outdoor/emergency wards and have, continuous exposure with patients. The response rate varied between years of training which might affect student perception regarding medical profession.

### CONCLUSION:

Choice of medical profession is influenced by many factors like, type of work, duration of training, life style, public demand and future income as a doctor. Salaries of doctors also have impact on decision making. The negative perception regarding medical profession is actual remuneration of physician that may be investigated by studies of interventions. Students are able to predict income by profession and hardship of physician life, which results negative perception about medical profession.

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