

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Attitude of Medical Students about Migrating Abroad: A Cross Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine attitude of undergraduate medical student's towards immigration, including preferred choice and reasons for immigration.

Study Design: Cross-Sectional Study.

Place and Duration of Study: The study was carried out on students of Wah Medical College, from January 2019 to June 2019.

Materials and Methods: All students at medical college were included in the sampling frame. A sample of 300 students was taken by random sampling using random number generator. A questionnaire was formulated comprising of two parts. The first part of questionnaire comprised of close ended questions about the age of students their gender, year of education, preferred choice for specialization, desire to migrate or not and preferred destination for migration The second part included reasons for migration and non-migration. The data was analyzed on SPSS version 21.

Results: Almost half of the students (48.3%) showed intention towards migration. Those who wanted to migrate, United Kingdom was the top choice (27.9%). Better job opportunities, family reasons and medical facilities were the most common reasons for migration while intention to serve the country, family issues and lack of financial resources were the main reasons to stay in the country.

Conclusion: Half of the students intend to migrate to other countries and favorite destination for work is United Kingdom.

Key Words: *Education, Internal Medicine, Migration, Medical Graduates, Specialization.*

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Introduction

The phenomenon of health professional migration has been known and documented several decades back. Reasons are broadly demographic and epidemiological changes worldwide.¹ This trend is more prevalent in Asian and African countries as these countries provides least facilities to their doctors and paramedical staff.² These doctors when come in the workforce face the harsh realities of the profession. The amplified workload, lack of support from the government, insecure and poorly paid jobs

compel them to migrate to developed world. This is commonly known as the 'brain drain'.³

This migration of doctors as well as supporting staff is the most challenging aspects of globalization that has led to policy changes at the technical and political level.⁴ Most of the countries that are generating doctors are the countries that have huge population and are actually in need of them. These are future leaders that can bring about reforms in academics and research but because of migration trends, there is intellectual, socioeconomic and demographic loses.⁵

Migration and reasons behind migration from developing countries has been addressed in literature but very little is known about Pakistan. A survey conducted at Wah Cantt⁶ showed that international careers were anticipated by 27.2% of participants with main reasons for immigration were high salary, higher educational opportunities, good working conditions and structured career path.⁶

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Another study carried at Dow Medical College and Civil hospital Karachi showed that 54% of the doctors wish to go abroad. Major factors for immigration were better quality of post-graduation training (48.2%) and economic prospects (35.2%).⁷ These researches gave a variable view of physician's perception therefore, objective of this study was to determine the attitude of undergraduate medical student's towards immigration, including their preferred destination and reasons

Materials and Methods

A cross sectional study was carried out on the medical students Jan-June 2019 (6 months). Sample size was calculated three hundred (300) by World Health Organization (WHO) sample size calculator (*p*-value of 0.27).⁶ All students were included in the sampling frame except the students on the foreign seats (students who are not Pakistani nationals) and selected by random number generator. A questionnaire was formulated after extensive literature search. It comprised of two parts. The first part comprised of close ended questions about age, gender, year of education, parent's education, preferred choice for specialization, intention to give post graduate exam, desire to immigrate or not and preferred destination for immigration. The second part was an open-ended questionnaire regarding reasons for immigration and non-immigration. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board. Informed consent was taken by the participants. The quantitative data was entered and analyzed by SPSS version 21.

Results

The mean age was 21.47±1.97. There were 137(44.9%) males. Among the participants, 46(15.1%) had fathers' and 18(5.9%) had mothers' with medical education. The number of participants who intend to opt for different specialties were 105 (35%) in surgery, 90(30%) in medicine, 50 (16.6%) in Obstetrics/Gynecology and 40 (13.3%) in Pediatrics. Maximum number of students. 85(27.9%) want to immigrate to UK. The students with the intention to prepare for postgraduate examination were 255(83.6%) including FCPS 182(59.7%), PLAB 49(16.1%), USMLE 38(12.5%) and 36(11.8%) other exams. Students without intention to immigrate were 155(51.6%) while 145(48.3%) were willing to immigrate. (Figure 1).

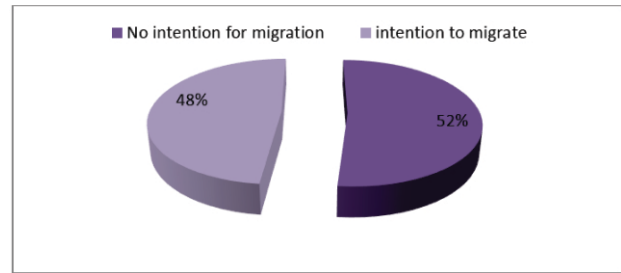


Fig 1: Intention to migrate

Table 1: Reasons for Immigration and Non Immigration

Reasons for immigration	Percentage of students	Reasons for non-immigration	Percentage of students
Better job opportunities	89	Service to Country	54
Better facilities and health care system	48	Family and related issues	47
Medical education opportunities	34	Others	7
Economic reasons	21	Lack of funds	4
Family and related issues	11	Visa Issues	3
Appropriate working hours	6		
Other reasons	4		

Discussion

This study showed that 52% students have no intention to migrate which is comparatively less than the results of studies carried out by Nazish Imran et al and Gouda P et al.^{8,9} This trend of non -migration is may be due to the fact that, we have a higher proportion of females (55%) who cannot think of leaving the country because of our sociocultural dynamics.¹⁰ The students themselves quote that they want to stay in the country to serve it and there are some family issues which bound them to stay. These results were consistent with other studies carried out in Pakistan^{7,11} which proves that recent stability in the country, better stipend and reduce terrorism have encourage our young doctors to stay and serve in the country.

The students who want to migrate to other countries intend to do so mainly because of better job opportunities, family reasons, medical facilities etc. A research conducted in Karachi and many other international researches also supports these

observations respectively.^{5,8,12,13,14,15,16} One of the studies stated that major reasons for migrating to the developed world are the new immigration policies and shortage of health workforce.¹⁷

Surgery was the most preferred choice for specialization of 35% of students. The result is similar to the study carried out by Mandeville KL et al.¹⁸ However some national and international studies have shown that most students want to do specialization in relatively new field of internal medicine.^{7,6,19} The interest in the latest fields of medicine is encouraging, showing that our younger generation is trying to keep pace with the developed world.

In our research, most of the students 91(29.8)% wanted to migrate to UK. This result is consistent with various studies conducted in Pakistan where preferred choice for immigration is UK and USA.^{6,7,10,11} However a research conducted in Sri Lanka and Uganda the participants want to migrate to Australia and America.^{12,20}

Conclusion

Half of the students intend to migrate to other countries and their favorite destination for work is United Kingdom.

Limitations

The study could have contributed more to the subject but due to restricted time and number of students the scope of the study is limited. A qualitative part of the study could have generated better themes and sub theme for the objectives.

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