

# Future Choices of Female Medical Students

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## **Abstract:**

*Career choice in medical profession for the female medical students has always been a difficult task. The single most important determinant in this context is the flexibility of training and flexible working hours<sup>10</sup>*

## **1. Introduction**

The past few decades have revolutionized the participation of females in almost all dimensions and fields of life and in many fields they have not only marked their presence but have also outnumbered the male counterparts. Following this trend, medical field has also experienced a constant rise in the induction of female students in medical colleges across the globe. This makes their future career preferences highly significant as they are ultimately going to shape out the fate of various specialties. A number of factors such as skill and aptitude, presence of a role model, working hours, personal interest, intellectual challenge, family and social pressures, the advice of relatives and friends, financial benefits, job opportunities and scope, earning of respect and lifestyle associations influence the selection of a specialty.<sup>1-3</sup> Furthermore, the demands of the personal life of a female also play a significant role in the ultimate decision regarding career.<sup>4</sup>

A review of the published medical literature sculpted that the career of a female doctor is not uniform. In a vast majority of cases, there is a peak in the start, a dip in the middle age because of marriage and child bearing and then again a potential to rise in the later years.<sup>5</sup>

Various studies have been done across the globe in this context. A study conducted in Netherlands in 2007 depicted that 34% of all specialists and 40% of all physicians were females and it is highly expected that the number will rise to 66% by 2027<sup>6</sup>. Another study done in Australia, Canada, England and the United States in 2002 showed that women make up 30% of all practicing physicians and half of all medical students<sup>7</sup>. A study carried out in India delineated similar statistics by illustrating that 51% female students joined medical colleges in 2014-15 cornering 23,522 seats as compared to 22,934 male

students<sup>8</sup> but even then, there is considerable shortage of female doctors in India as many of them do not end up practicing. Bangladesh and Pakistan, however, have a much higher proportion of females in medical colleges i.e. 60% and 70% respectively<sup>9</sup>.

Keeping in view the prevailing trend of gender distribution in medical colleges of the whole country, it will not be wrong to say that females have become the stake holders of the future of the health care in Pakistan. Thereby, it is the need of the hour to chalk out the future preferences of these female medical students. This will not only point out the saturation that might take place in some specialties, leaving the other ones to die out but also the fraction of females which might not be interested in following the career. This, in effect, can generate useful information for higher officials to timely intervene and devise strategies for balancing out the situation.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

**SETTING:** The study was done at Rawalpindi Medical University.

**DURATION:** 2 weeks

**STUDY POPULATION:** Female medical students of 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> year and final year

**SAMPLE SIZE:** 150

**SAMPLE TECHNIQUE:** Non-probability consecutive sampling

**INCLUSION CRITERION:** 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> year and final year female students of RMU

**EXCLUSION CRITERION:** foreign students were excluded from the research

**STUDY DESIGN:** Descriptive cross-sectional study

### 3. Tools for Data Collection

#### DATA COLLECTION:

Data was collected by self-administered questionnaires.

DATA ANALYSIS: SPSS version 22.0

### 4. Ethical Considerations

- Consent was taken from the respondents.
- Anonymity was ensured.

### 5. Results

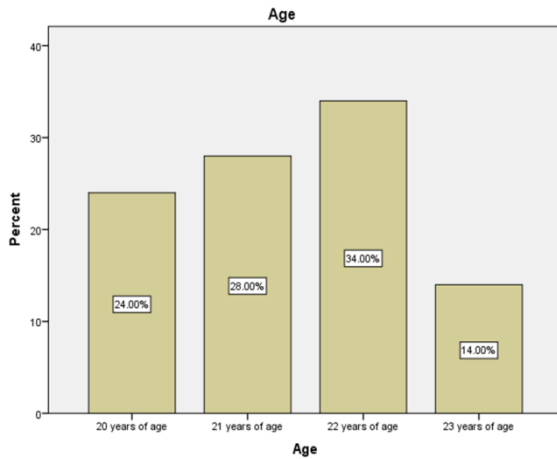


Figure 1. Age of respondents

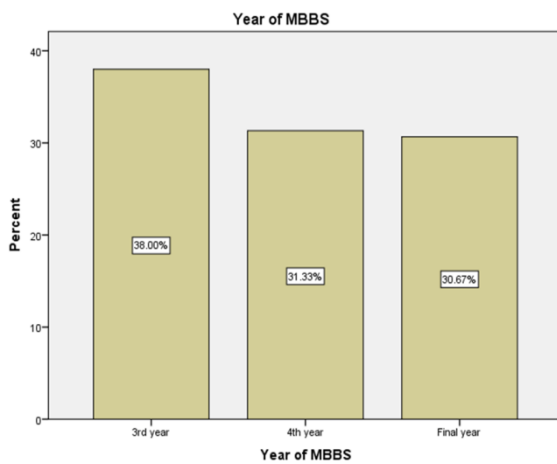


Figure 2. Year of MBBS

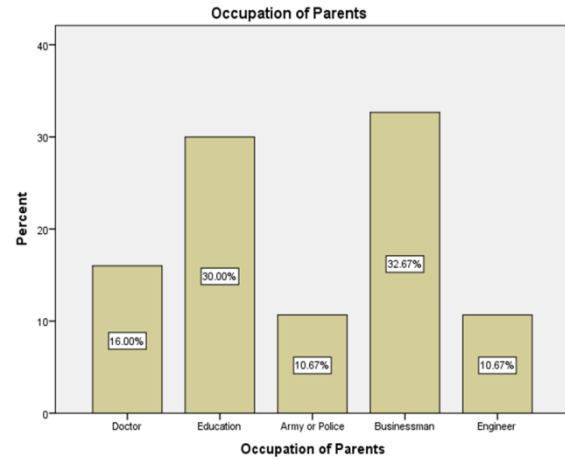


Figure 3. Occupation of parents

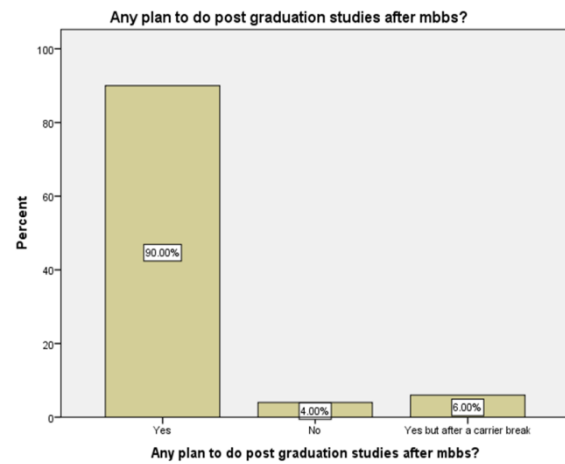


Figure 4. Plan to do post-graduation studies after MBBS

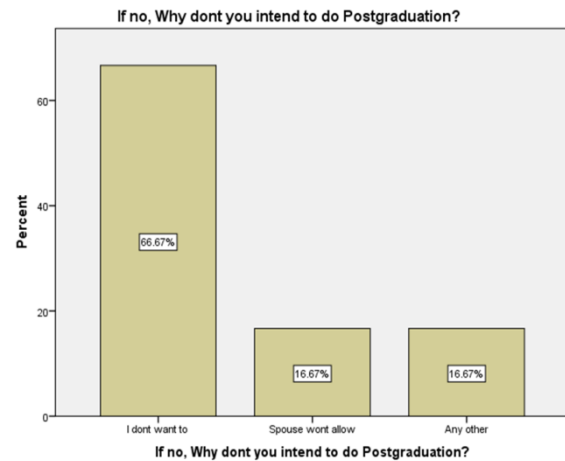
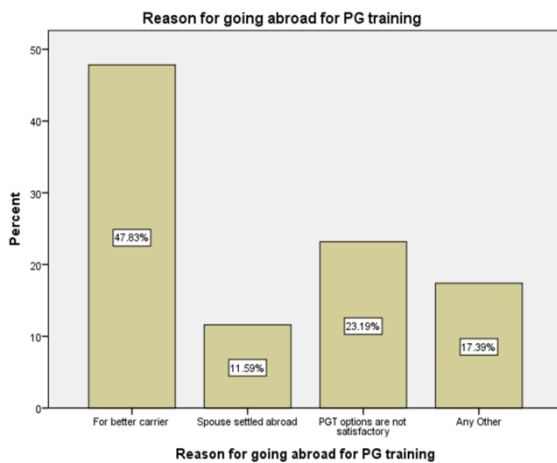


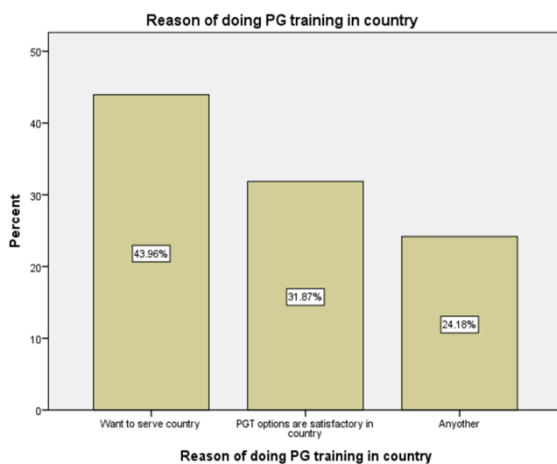
Figure 5. If no, why



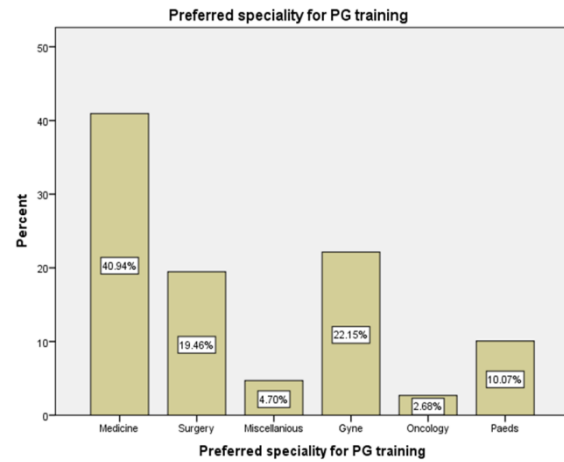
**Figure 6. Desired place of PG training**



**Figure 7. Reason for going abroad**



**Figure 8. Reason of doing PG training in country**



**Figure 9. Preferred speciality for PG training**

## 5. Discussion

We found in our study that 22.15% female students preferred gynecology and obstetrics as a career. These results are in coherence with a research conducted in the four public and private sector colleges of Peshawar<sup>11</sup> in 2016 in which 23.33% females preferred for this specialty. This good percentage of females wanting to join gynecology and obstetrics can be attributed to the fact that females prefer to work in the fields having same sex role models and the desire of female patients to be treated by female doctors.

In our study, 19.4% of female medical students opted for surgery as a career preference. These results are consistent with the research carried out at Sindh Medical College, Karachi<sup>12</sup> in 2015 in which 19.7% of students elected surgery and slightly higher than the one conducted in the three medical colleges of Switzerland<sup>13</sup> in 2003 which showed that 11.3% students chose this specialty. This low preference for surgery by the female medical students can be explained by the male dominance in this field and hectic surgical training.

The field of medicine and allied takes the lead with 40.94% female medical students willing to join it. These results are contrary to research conducted in Nigeria<sup>14</sup> 2013 in which 17.5% of females opted for this specialty. This dominance of medicine might be due to better training opportunities in our setup and the fact that many medical students believe that their role

as a doctor will be truly fulfilled when they will join the force as medical specialists.

Our study also depicted that 10.07% of students desired to choose pediatrics. These results are similar to the researches done in Malaysia 15 in 1998 and in Karachi 12 in 2015 which showed the choice of pediatrics at 8% and 10 % respectively.

4.7% opted for miscellaneous fields like radiology, ENT, pathology, psychiatry in our study.

## 6. Conclusion

Our study concluded that medicine, followed by gynaecology /obstetrics and surgery respectively are the specialties of choice among female medical students of RMU.

## 7. Recommendations

1) Regular career counseling sessions should be done to motivate the female medical students for joining all the specialties. This will prevent the saturation of some and dying out of other specialties.

2) The admission policy of medical colleges and induction policy of post graduate training, both should be tailored according to the medical needs of the country.

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