

Factors in Opting Medical Career in Pakistan and Abroad - A Cross Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To statistically analyse the factors leading to opt career in Pakistan and abroad in doctors of district Sialkot of Pakistan.

Study Design: Questionnaire based survey.

Place & duration of study: Department of General Surgery and Medical Education , Khawaja Muhammad Safdar Medical College, Sialkot from November 2017 to May2018.

Methods: Questionnaires were distributed to almost 2015 doctors working locally and those who have worked abroad(any country)for a minimum of one year or have foreign postgraduate degree. The doctors were grouped in two categories Group I Local Career and Group II- Career Abroad. The questionnaire was to be filled completely and a time of 6 months was given to answer all questions. The collected questionnaire were studied and any queries and ambiguities were made clear by talking to the doctors in person or on telephones. Doctors having basic medical degree from foreign were included in Local career group while those who incompletely filled the questionnaires were excluded from the study. Data was entered and analysis done by SPSS v 22.

Results: Total doctors included in our study were 2015, out of which 1317 were included in local career group & 698 were in Career abroad group. , foreign graduates were 578 & postgraduate foreign degree holders were 185, doctors with foreign service experience were 513 & those having local & foreign experience both were 415, Government service doctors were 823, private job was of 276,but those having both Government & private jobs were 534,doctors having only private practice and no job experience were 92.

Conclusion: Opting career by the doctors is a complex and vague issue which has multifactorial basis. The trend of opting career abroad is exotic for those having few resources while the doctors with sound financial background opt it to excel and ace higher qualifications and at times don't return back due to adjustment concerns. Litigation and Family concern play a strong role in leaving the established career abroad. Career at Pakistan is a definite and reliable option but with some social concerns and a sense of compromise at higher qualifications as well as poor gains as compared to the input involved in career building.

Keywords: Career, foreign graduates, postgraduation, public sector, private sector, private practice.

INTRODUCTION

In today times, it has become very common approach that many of the Pakistani medical professionals go to other countries around the world. They think that the environment of hospitals abroad is more comfortable and appealing, and they want to settle temporarily or permanently¹.

One of the factors responsible for this behavior is the continuously increasing work load and job hours in hospitals of Pakistan, especially in Government set-ups, where doctors become exhausted and then ,they neither can focus on their work fully, nor can give their maximum potential to the duties².

Promotion of advertisements and details of jobs and seats and the scholarship programs available in different institutes and hospitals all over the world on different websites play a major role in attracting the physicians and they prefer to go there instead of serving their own country. Some doctors have their relatives in other countries, so they also go there in competition or to live with them^{3,4}.

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A large number of physicians and Doctors from Pakistan go to foreign countries also because of decreased satisfaction due to increasing life requirements and needs and due to less job opportunities and facilities in their home cities or desired places⁵.Some go to abroad for doing specializations in their respective fields and most often settle there. Those students who cannot become on top of the very high merit of medical colleges and universities of Pakistan, tend to go there for medical education and they continue their career in the same college or its affiliated hospital^{6,7}.

A huge competition in getting seats in public sectors becomes frustrating for the doctors because they already spend a long duration of medical education and then the specialization trainings and exams,all of which put a big pressure on someone's life and quality of earning⁸.

When many people related to the medical profession leave their own places and go to other countries, both countries suffer from problems in many aspects as they always face the differences of language, culture, living standards and societies⁹.

No doubt, Pakistan suffers from a great loss of talent, knowledge and skills, when these professionals leave and give their services, hard work and efforts to other nations. Above mentioned problems need to be considered very importantly, taken seriously and to be solved on urgent grounds¹⁰.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Questionnaires were distributed to almost 2015 doctors working locally and those who have worked abroad(any country) for a minimum of one year or have foreign postgraduate degree. The doctors were grouped in two categories Group I Local Career and Group II- Career Abroad. The doctors having been categorized in the Group II have spent their time in studies and specialization in countries like, USA, KSA, south Africa, Uganda, UK and Ireland. The questionnaire was to be filled completely and a time of 6 months was given to answer all questions. The collected questionnaires were studied and any queries and ambiguities were made clear by talking to the doctors in person or on telephones. Doctors having basic medical degree from foreign countries were included in Local career group while those who incompletely filled the questionnaires were excluded from the study. Data was entered and analysis done by SPSS v 22.

RESULTS

General variables in the study are depicted in Table I. Table II shows comparison between the feedbacks. Table III shows final remarks of the groups

Table I: Study to Summarize

| | |
|---|------|
| Total Doctors who were included in the study | 2015 |
| Local career Group | 1317 |
| Career Abroad Group | 698 |
| Foreign graduates | 578 |
| Postgraduate foreign degree holders | 185 |
| Doctors with foreign service experience | 513 |
| Doctors having local and foreign experience both | 415 |
| Doctors with Government Service only | 823 |
| Doctors having experience of private jobs only | 276 |
| Doctors having Government and private jobs both | 534 |
| Doctors having only private practice and no job experience. | 92 |

Table II: Findings of the Questionnaires

| | Group I 1317(100%) | | Group II 698(100%) | |
|---|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| | % | No | % | No |
| Financial concerns | 55% | 724 | 7% | 48 |
| To excel/ higher qualifications | 32% | 421 | 95% | 633 |
| Litigation concern | 12% | 158 | 41% | 286 |
| Family issues | 5% | 65 | 35% | 244 |
| Problems at Workplace | 62% | 816 | 22% | 153 |
| Dignity and Satisfaction | 19% | 250 | 82% | 572 |
| Security Issues | 23% | 302 | 26% | 181 |
| Religious concerns | 5% | 65 | 11% | 76 |
| Racist problems/ first degree citizens? | 2% | 26 | 90% | 628 |
| Lifestyle Issues | 72% | 948 | 85% | 593 |
| Social Issues | 9% | 118 | 32% | 223 |
| Monetary returns | 38% | 500 | 70% | 488 |
| Recommendations for next generation | 35% | 460 | 22% | 153 |

Table III: Final opinion

| | Group I 1317(100%) | | Group II 698(100%) | |
|--|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Opt local career | 72% | 28% | 68% | 32% |
| Opt foreign career | 35% | 65% | 52% | 48% |
| Opt foreign postgraduation only not career | 91% | 9% | 95% | 5% |

DISCUSSION

The poor outcome in terms of financial gains is one factor that the local doctors prefer going to other countries. The issues which are critical are to be highlighted; as the Group II is convinced to have foreign qualifications to excel but they strongly dislike the policies of the countries which don't allow the foreign doctors to take interventional specialties like surgery. Litigation being common but covered by assurances from the companies is still a grey zone for doctors not to opt surgical and obstetric specialties and quit.

The cultural and social environment at times become intolerable and the doctors opted to revert back to native countries for the brought up of their children.

Our Study presented that 72% doctors in Group-I & 68% doctors in Group-II opted local career, but 28% in Group-I & 32% doctors in Group-II didn't opted it, while the study by Imran et al¹¹ showed that 65% doctors opted local career & 35% to not opt it.

We reported the incidence of opting foreign career to be 35% in Group-I & 52% in Group-II, but the doctors who didn't selected foreign career were 65% in Group-I & 48% in Group-II, while Saaiq et al¹² showed the incidence of doctors having foreign career was 40% & those who didn't adopt this were 60%.

Almost 91% doctors in Group-I & 95% in Group-II opted foreign post graduation not only career in our study, but 9% in Group-I & 5% in Group-II didn't choose this option, while 87% doctors opted foreign post graduation not only career in the study by Akhtar et al¹³, but 13% doctors didn't do this according to them.

CONCLUSION

Opting career by the doctors is a complex and vague issue which has multifactorial basis. The trend of opting career abroad is exotic for those having few resources while the doctors with sound financial background opt it to excel and higher qualifications and at times don't return back due to adjustment concerns. Litigation and Family concern play a strong role in leaving the established career abroad. Career at Pakistan is a definite and reliable option with some social concerns and a sense of compromise at higher qualifications as well as poor gains as compared to the input involved in career building.

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