

Factors Contributing to Students' Choice of Field of Study in Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences

Khatibi R, MD¹; Vahabi A, MSc²; Yazdanpanah K, MD³; Ghasemi B, MD⁴;
Khadem Erfan M, MSc⁵

¹ Instructor, Educational development center, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and Health services.

² Instructor, Faculty of Hygiene, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and Health services.

³ Assistant professor, Internal medicine department, School of Medicine, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and Health services.

⁴ Instructor, Educational development center, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and Health services.

⁵ Instructor, Department of parasitology, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences and Health services.

Abstract

Background and purpose: Choosing the field of study is considered an important choice in one's life, so careful consideration of possible options is critical to make the right decision. This study is an attempt to identify contributing factors to students' choosing their field of study

Methods: In this cross sectional study students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences who were studying in the first semester of 2005-6 academic year were selected randomly from each program proportionate to sex ratio and comparative number of students studying in each program. A self-administered questionnaire with questions on possible factors contributing to their choice of their study field and extent of satisfaction with the program was used. Data extracted from questionnaire and tested by T test using SPSS software.

Results: Of a total of 386 students, 369(95%) completed and returned the questionnaire. Of all students, 117(31.7%) stated that they had good information about their choice of study when they chose their study field, 168(45.5%) said that they had little information and 84(22.8%) said that they had no information. Compared with male students female students choice were more affected by their gender (27.9% versus 19%, $p=0.045$), education of other members of the family (46.7% versus 29.8%, $p=0.003$), distance of the university to their home town (50.5% versus 37.9%, $p=0.033$). Of all respondent, 151(40.9%) said they were highly satisfied with their field of study, 146(39.6%) said that they were mildly satisfied and, 70(19%) were not satisfied at all.

Conclusion: Given the costs of training a doctor in terms of time and energy and money, this shows that much should be done to help high school graduates to have an informed image of health care professions.

Key words: CHOOSING STUDY FIELD, SATISFACTION WITH STUDY FIELD

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Corresponding author: Dr Raz Khatibi is an Instructor in Educational development center of Kurdistan University of medical Sciences and Health services.

Address: Sanandaj, Pasdaran Avenue, Kurdistan University of medical sciences, Educational development center

Fax: 08716626969

Phone: 0918872490 - 08716626970

E-mail: razkh2002@yahoo.com

Introduction

Selection of the field of study is considered an important choice in one's life, so careful consideration of possible options is critical to make the right decision. A review of literature showed that the following factors are involved:

a- Sex: the students' gender is a very important factor in choosing the field of study (1, 2);
b- Interest: the first step to have a reasonable selection is to know one's own interests (1, 3);
c- Being informed: It is obvious that interest without general knowledge of the nature of the study field will not help make a right decision (4,5);
d- fitness: Before selecting a course, a student must consider his mental and physical conditions, because these factors play important role in success. (1)
e- occupational prospect (3, 4);
f-Other: When a student wants to select a course, he must consider other factors, such as possibility of postgraduate degrees and cultural and environmental characteristics of the university location. (6)

The aim of this research was to identify contributing factors to students' selecting field of study in Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences.

Materials and Methods

In this cross sectional study students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences who were studying in the first semester of 2005-6 a

cademic year were selected randomly from each program proportionate to sex ratio and comparative number of students studying in each program.

A self-administered questionnaire with 23 questions was given to them.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts; the first part included 4 questions on the demographic data of the students, and the second part consisted of the 19 questions to examine the subjects' opinion on possible factors contributing to their choice of their study

Table 1: Students' interest on their field of study by the program

Interest program	Interested (%)	**Not interested	Total
environmental hygiene	16 (36.4)	28 (63.6)	46(100)
nursing	27 (35.5)	49 (64.5)	76(100)
general hygiene	9 (47.4)	10 (52.6)	19(100)
radiology	9 (52.9)	8 (47.1)	17(100)
medicine	54 (70.4)	27 (29.6)	81(100)
obstetrics	16 (42.9)	22(57.1)	38(100)
family hygiene	8 (53.3)	7 (46.7)	15(100)
laboratory sciences	25 (58.1)	18 (41.9)	43(100)
anesthesiology	2 (16.7)	10 (83.3)	12(100)
Operation room	9 (52.9)	8 (47.1)	17(100)
Total	178 (49.2)	184 (50.8)	364(100)

***The students answered this question: "will you choose the field you are studying in if you have another chance for choosing your field". If the answer was "yes" we considered the student interested in his/her choice. If the answer was "no" we considered the student not interested in his/her choice.*

field and extent of satisfaction with the program they studied.

The validity of the questionnaire was determined by considering the medical education experts' opinions and its reliability was determined by using test-retest exam ($r=0.86$). Data extracted from questionnaire and tested by T test using SPSS software.

Results

Of a total of 386 students, 369(95%) completed and returned the questionnaire. Of all subjects, 216(58.5%) were female and 153(41.5%) were male. Table 1 shows the number of subjects by the program.

Of all students, 117(31.7%) stated that they had good information about their choice of study when they chose their study field, 168(45.5%) said that they had little information and 84(22.8%) said that they had no information.

Most students expressed the influence of occupational prospect when they selected their

field of study.

Compared with male students female students choice were more affected by their gender (27.9% versus 19%, $p=0.045$), education of other members of the family (46.7% versus 29.8%, $p=0.003$), distance of the university to their home town (50.5% versus 37.9%, $p=0.033$).

Of all students, 102(27.6%) stated that having a higher education degree were more important for them than the field of study. In others word what they wanted most was to enter university. Approximately half of them emphasized that they wouldn't select their field of study if they had the opportunity to do so again. (Table1)

Of all respondent, 151(40.9%) said that they were highly satisfied with their field of study, 146(39.6%) said that they were mildly satisfied and, 70(19%) were not satisfied at all. (Table 2) Table 3 shows the contributing factors to satisfaction of students studying in different programs and table 4 shows the contributing factors to dissatisfaction of students studying in different programs.

Table 2: Satisfaction rate in students studying in different programs

Rate of satisfaction Study program	High (%)	Fair (%)	Low (%)
Environmental hygiene	30.4	23.9	45.7
Nursing	27.3	27.3	45.5
General hygiene	31.6	16.8	52.6
Radiology	41.2	17.6	41.2
Medicine	51.9	11.1	37
Obstetrics	47.4	15.8	36.8
Family hygiene	53.3	20	26.7
Laboratory sciences	48.9	20	31.1
Anesthesiology	41.7	33.3	25
Operation room	41.1	19.1	39.8
Total	41.1	39.8	19.1

Discussion

The results of this study showed that students' sex and interest had a great influence on the students choice of field of study, which is rather the same as factors found in other studies(1, 2, 3).

Occupational prospect influenced in the entire students' course selection, especially female students and it cab be because of costume in IRAN. (4, 7, 8)

The choices of female students were more affected by the distance of their home city to the university where they had to study. One possible reason is that Iranian families are reluctant to let their daughter live far from them before they get married.

Although a clear understanding of studying and later working as a graduate in a field are the foundation of an informed decision making

about the study field (5, 9), most of the students said they had low information about their choice at the time they choosing their field of study.

The medical students had highest frequency of "yes"(70%) to the following question:

"will you choose the field you are studying in if have another chance for choosing your field of study?" which is not surprising. What is surprising is rather the large number of students (30%) who were not satisfied with it. Given the costs of training a doctor in terms of time and energy and money, this shows that much should be done to help high school graduates to have an informed image of health care professions.

As table 3 and for 4 shows 'interest' and 'good social status' of graduates are more contributed to satisfaction of students while 'poor job vacancies' and 'By chance selection of the field' are the most frequent factor causing

Table 3: Frequency distribution of factors contributing to satisfaction of students studying in different programs

Factor Study field	Interest (%)	good social status of graduates (%)	Possible post graduate degree (%)	Short length (%)	Good job vacancies for graduates (%)	Good income predicted for graduates (%)
environmental hygiene	6.3	0	17.4	5.6	22.2	7.1
nursing	20.7	6.8	18.1	11.1	30.6	10.7
general hygiene	2.7	2.7	10.1	16.7	5.6	3.6
radiology	2.7	5.4	2.9	5.6	5.6	17.9
medicine	39.6	60.8	10.9	5.6	5.6	35.6
obstetrics	11.7	9.5	10.1	5.6	0	7.1
family hygiene	3.6	1.4	3.6	0	2.8	0
laboratory sciences	11.7	4.1	18.8	22.2	16.7	7.1
anesthesiology	9	2.7	7	5.6	2.8	0
Operation room	0	6.8	7.2	22.2	8.3	10.7
Total	30.1	20.1	37.4	4.9	9.8	7.6

Table 4: Frequency distribution of factors contributing to dissatisfaction with the study program

Factor Study field	By chance selection of the field (%)	occupational status of graduates (%)	Length of program (%)	Unsatisfactory social status (%)	poor job vacancies (%)	Low income predicted for graduates (%)
environmental hygiene	20.4	4	0	22.2	12.7	15.6
nursing	23.7	8	5.6	38.9	19.1	21.9
general hygiene	7.5	8	0	5.6	4.5	4.7
radiology	3.2	8	0	0	5.5	0
medicine	7.5	28	88.9	11.1	21.8	25
obstetrics	14	12	2.8	3.7	20.9	10.9
family hygiene	5.4	0	0	0	1.8	1.6
laboratory sciences	11.8	24	2.8	9.3	10	7.8
anesthesiology	3.2	4	0	5.6	1.8	3.1
Operation room	3.2	4	0	3.7	1.8	9.4
Total	25.2	6.8	9.8	14.6	29.8	17.3

dissatisfaction with field of study. This again shows that providing help for high school graduates to have a better understanding of the requirements to study and later work in a given field and the demands of that field of the individuals working on that field may lead to a more effective higher education whose graduates are more satisfied with their field and are more likely to find a job in a relevant area.

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