

A Study on the Personality Traits of Students Who Have Chosen Medicine as Their Career

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Abstract : Choosing a career which matches a student's personality traits is one of the key factors for future work satisfaction. This is because career satisfaction is at the highest when it is in line with one's personality strength, values and attitudes. Personality traits play a major role in determining the success of a student in the medical course. In the pre-clinical years, medical theories are being emphasized, thus, conscientious students would perform better than those with lower level of this trait. As the emphasis changes in the clinical years during which patient interaction is important, personality traits which involved interpersonal values become more essential for success. The aim of this study was to determine the personality traits of students who had chosen medicine as their career. It was a cross-sectional study conducted at the Islamic Science University of Malaysia. The respondents consisted of 81 students whose age ranged between 20-21 years old. A set of personality assessment inventory index which has been validated for the local context was used to determine the students' personality traits. The instrument assessed 15 personality traits namely: aggressive, analytical, autonomy, creativity, extrovert, intellectual, motivation, diversity, resiliency, self-criticism, control, helpful, support, structured and achievement. The scores ranged between 1-100%, and they were categorized into low (1-30%), moderate (40-60%) and high scores (70-100%). The respondents were Year 3 pre-clinical medical students and there were more female students (69%) compared to male students (31%). Majority of them were from middle-income families. Approximately 70% of both parents of the respondents had tertiary education. Majority of the students had high scores in autonomy, creativity, diversity, helpful, structured and achievement. In other words, more than 50% of them scored high (70-100%) in these traits. Scoring high in these traits was beneficial for the medical course. For aggressive trait, 54% of them had moderate scores which is compatible for medicine as this indicated an inclination to being assertive. In the analytical and intellectual components, only 40% and 25% had high scores respectively. These results contradicted the usual expectation of medical students whereby they are expected to be highly analytical and intellectual. It would be an added value if the students had high scores in being extrovert as this reflects on good interpersonal values, however, the students had approximately similar scores in all categories of this trait. Being resilient in the medical school is important as the course is difficult and demanding. The students had good scores in this component in which 46% had high scores while 39% had moderate scores. In conclusion, by understanding their personality traits, strengths and weaknesses, the students will have an opportunity to improve themselves in the areas they lack. This will help them to become better doctors in future.

Keywords : career, medical students, medicine, personality traits

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