

Reasons for Choosing Medicine and the Personality Traits of Pre-Clinical Medical Students

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Abstract : Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions that people have to make in life. While choosing a suitable career, a person cannot ignore their intrinsic traits such as the type of personality, interests, values, and aptitude. The objective of this study is to ascertain the personality of the pre-clinical medical students and their reasons or intentions for choosing medicine as a career. This study is a cross-sectional study involving Year 3 pre-clinical medical students at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. Participants were given a set of validated questionnaires on demographic data and open-ended questions for reasons of choosing medicine. Thematic analysis were used to analyse the open-ended question. The Participants were also required to answer a Career Interest Questionnaire (based on Holland's Theory). A total of 81 Year 3 medical students were involved in this study. About two third (69%) of them were female and their age ranged from 20 to 21 years old. The majority of them were from middle-income families. From the thematic analysis, there were several reasons given for choosing medicine by the students. The majority of the students stated that it was their passion and interest in the medical field (45.7%). Approximately 24.7% decided to take the medical course because of parents/family influenced and 19.8% mentioned that they wanted to help the society. Other themes emerged were jobs opportunity in future (1.2%) and influenced by friends (3.7%). Based on Holland's theory, ideally to become a good medical doctor one should score high in investigative and social personality trait. However, 26.3% of the students had low scores in these personality traits. We then looked into the reasons given by these students for choosing medicine. Approximately 28% were due to parents/family decision while 52% admitted that it was due to their interest. When compared with the group of students with high personality scores (investigative and social), there was not much difference in the reasons given for choosing medicine. The main reasons given by the students for choosing medicine were own interest, family's influence and to help others. However, a proportion of them had low scores in the personality traits which are relevant for medicine. Although some of these students admitted that they choose medicine based on their interest, their strength might not be suitable for their chosen carrier.

Keywords : career, medical students, medicine, personality

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