

ATTITUDES OF MEDICAL STUDENTS TOWARDS TAKING PART-TIME JOBS: A STUDY AMONGST FIRST YEAR CLINICAL STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

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ABSTRACT

Background: Student part-time jobs are employments taken up by students while in school. Students in tertiary institutions do engage in part-time jobs because of the associated benefits. Some of these benefits include work experience, independence, financial support, and job satisfaction. Different studies have reported different attitudes towards taking part-time jobs among university students.

Objective: To determine the attitudes of medical students in their first clinical year of study at the University of Ibadan medical school towards taking up part-time medical jobs within the university hospital.

Methods: This study was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted among medical students in their first clinical year of study. Eighty one first clinical – year medical students were recruited to participate in this study. All participants were interviewed using a self-administered questionnaire to obtain information on bio-data, scholarship benefit status, level of satisfaction with monthly income, choices of part-time jobs, and the factors that might informed choice of a part-time job. No questionnaire was discarded because all were correctly filled. Data collected was coded, entered, and analysed using the SPSS version 16 software. Analyses of all variables were done using descriptive statistics.

Results: The mean age of the 81 respondents was 20.8 (± 1.6) years and 51.9% were males. A higher proportion of the male respondents were studying on scholarship (57.1%), compared to that of the females (31.6%). Respondents studying on scholarship had a higher level of financial satisfaction. Over 90% of the participants supported the idea of part-time medical job creation for medical students. The majority of the respondents (64.2%) prefer to take up the job position of research assistantships. The amount of wages to be earned was the most predominant factor considered among the male respondents in their decision for taking up a part-time medical job, while opportunity to learn new skills was the most predominant factor considered by the females.

Conclusions: Medical students had a positive attitude towards combining work and study.

Keywords: Attitude; Medical students; Clinical year; Part-time; Medical jobs

INTRODUCTION

Earnings from part-time job positions play a contributory role in the empowerment and sustenance of students in tertiary institutions.¹ In fact, a study by Vickers et al in 2003 showed that the number of students that are taking up part-time job positions is on the increase.² Some of the benefits students derive from having part-time jobs include financial buoyancy, acquisition of administrative and leadership skills.²⁻⁵ Nevertheless, there are risks associated with combining work and study. Some of these risks include distractions from studies leading to reduced academic performance, high possibility of missing of classes

and dropping out.⁶⁻⁹ These risks were strongly associated with students who spent lengthy hours at work at the expense of their academic pursuits.^{6,7}

Only a few Nigerian studies have been conducted to explore the attitude of students towards work and study.¹⁰ This is because the work and study program is under-utilized in various Nigerian tertiary institutions at present.^{10,11} In a study on a population of university students who were given the opportunity to have part time employment in their department, Omonijo *et al*¹⁰ reported that students taking part-time jobs related to

their disciplines enjoyed the benefits of building their occupational skills for the nearest future. They recommended that work-study programmes should be created in all academic disciplines.¹⁰ However, none of the participants of this study was a medical student. It has also been found that many high school and tertiary school students in developed countries have positive interest in work and study.^{12,13} This was found to be attributed to the financial benefits, work experience, satisfaction, and associated feelings of independence they could derive from engaging in part-time jobs.¹²⁻¹⁴

The attitude of University of Ibadan medical students towards part-time jobs has yet to be investigated; hence this study was conducted to evaluate the attitude of the University of Ibadan medical students in their first clinical year of study in the University College Hospital towards taking up part-time medical job positions, if such job opportunities are created.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study setting

This study was a cross-sectional survey which was conducted at the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This hospital is affiliated with the University of Ibadan and serves as the tertiary health institution where medical students from the University of Ibadan receive their clinical training. The medical students receiving their clinical training in this hospital are in their fourth, fifth, and sixth year.

Selection criteria

The medical students in the first clinical year of their study programme were considered ideal for this study because they are new students in the hospital environment and they are yet to be preoccupied with extra-curricular activities which could limit their interest in taking up part-time jobs. Of the 197 students in the first year in the year 2015, 81 (41.1%) participants who consented to be part of the study were recruited.

Study tool

The study tool used was a 19-item questionnaire with three sections (A, B, and C.)

- Section A: Obtained information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants
- Section B: Obtained information on scholarship award opportunities among the participants and also the level of satisfaction of the participants on their income
- Section C: Obtained information on: some selected medical job positions that the participants may want to take up if such job opportunities are provided; attitude of participants towards the idea of part-time job-creation in the university hospital; and the motivating factors that may influence their choice of the job positions.

Data collection and analysis

Only 81 students were recruited to participate, and each gave a verbal consent before they were given a questionnaire to fill. No questionnaire was discarded because they were all properly filled. Data collected were analysed using the SPSS version 16. Frequency distributions for all variables were obtained. Comparison between qualitative variables was done using the Chi-square test and a p – value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

The mean age of the eighty – one respondents that participated in this study was 20.8 (\pm 1.6) years, and their gender distribution was fairly even with 39 (48.1%) females and 42 (51.9%) males participating.

All respondents except one indicated their status of benefitting from scholarship awards. A higher proportion of the male respondents (57.1%) were studying on scholarship, compared to their female counterparts (31.6%) [$p=0.002$] (Table 1). The respondents (62.9%) that were studying on scholarship were more satisfied about their monthly income, compared to those not on scholarships (47.7%).

The job position of research assistantship was the most preferred by the respondents. The job position of laboratory assistantship was the least preferred among the majority of the male respondents, while the majority of the female respondents' least preferred to take up the job positions of being a radiology technician and a pathology demonstrator (Table 2).

Table 1: Relationship between gender and scholarship opportunity among respondents

		Gender		(X^2)
		Male [N=42]	Female [N=39]	P – value
Are you on any scholarship?	Yes	24 (57.1)	12 (30.8)	0.022
	No	18 (42.9)	27 (69.2)	

N=total number of respondents in each category

Table 2: Job positions preferred to be taken-up by the respondents

Job positions	Male [N=42]	Female [N=39]
Research assistant	28 (66.7)	24 (61.5)
Radiology technician	6 (14.3)	3 (7.7)
Anatomy demonstrator	11 (26.2)	6 (15.4)
Pathology demonstrator	7 (16.7)	3 (7.7)
Laboratory assistant	4 (9.5)	7 (17.9)
Surgery assistant	15 (35.7)	22 (56.4)

N=total number of respondents in each category

Almost all the respondents supported that part-time job opportunities should be created for medical students in the university hospital. However, the proportion of respondents studying on scholarship that supported the idea of job creation was slightly lower than that of the respondents not studying on any scholarship ([91.7%] versus [93.0%]), (Table 3).

Figure 1 shows the rankings of the motivating factors considered by the male respondents in taking up a part-time job position. The chart shows that attractiveness of salary had the highest frequency (16.7%) of being the first motivating factor to be

Table 3: Response of respondents towards creation of part-time medical jobs for medical students

		Are you on any scholarship?		(X ²) P – value
		Yes [N=36]	No [N=43]	
Are you in support of part-time job creation for medical students in UCH? ***	Yes	33 (91.7)	40 (93.0)	0.821
	No	3 (8.3)	3 (7.0)	

*** 2 missing values N=total number of respondents in each category

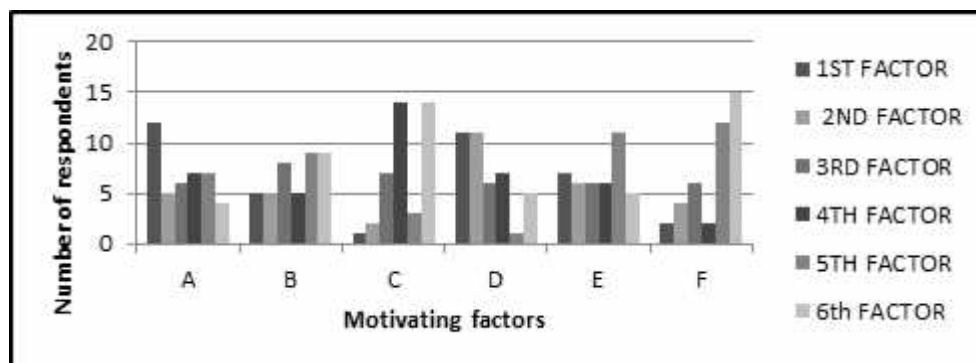


Figure 1: Ranking of the motivating factors considered by the male respondents in taking up a part-time job position

A= attractiveness of salary; B= flexibility of the job; C= prestige of the job; D= opportunity to learn new skills; E= opportunity to be under a good mentorship; F= work environment that fosters good interpersonal relationship among co-workers.

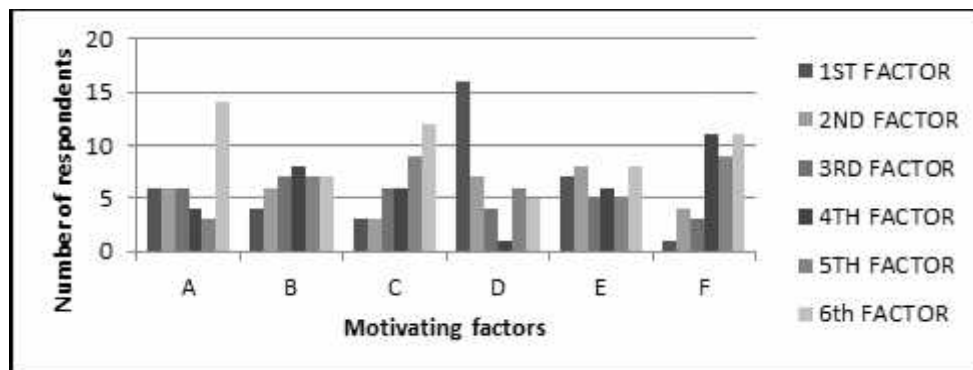


Figure 2: Ranking of the motivating factors considered by the female respondents in taking up a part-time medical job position

A= attractiveness of salary; B= flexibility of the job; C= prestige of the job; D= opportunity to learn new skills; E= opportunity to be under a good mentorship; F= work environment that fosters good interpersonal relationship among co-workers.

considered among the male respondents, while a work environment that fosters a good inter-personal relationship among co-workers had the highest frequency (35.7%) of being the last factor to be considered.

Opportunity to learn new skills is the highest (41.0%) motivating factor to be considered when taking up a medical job position, while attractiveness of the salary of the job position was the factor that had the highest frequency (35.9%) as the least considered factor among females, (Fig. 2).

DISCUSSION

The rationale for conducting this study was to evaluate the attitude of the medical students in the University College Hospital, Ibadan towards taking up part-time medical job positions in the university hospital. The study showed that medical students are favourably disposed to taking up part time job in order to gain skills and job experience as well as earn extra income.

The structure of the curriculum for medical education at the University of Ibadan is much different from that of the students in other departments in the university, in that medical students in the clinical phase of their academic programme do not have inter-semester breaks.¹⁵ This situation had made it imperative for these students to virtually always stay at school year round. During the clinical years, the programme is structured in such a way that students rotate through clinical departments in a yearlong schedule.

Many of the medical students that participated in this research were not studying on scholarship, hence the majority needed to depend solely on other sources of funding for their education. Not all of our respondents studying on scholarship were however satisfied with their level of income, this suggests that the scholarship amount is inadequate to cater for all the needs of some of the beneficiaries.

We observed that the majority of the beneficiaries of scholarship opportunities were male students. Gender bias has been found to be a limiting factor for females, when it comes to getting funds as the aptitude test employed for selection of candidate for scholarship by some agencies had been reported as being more favourable to male scholars.¹⁶ It has also been documented that male applicants are more aggressive than females, when it comes to sourcing for funds.¹⁷ Academic performances may also play an important role in securing a scholarship as it had been reported that male students have better academic performances than their female counterparts,¹⁸ this may be another reason why a higher proportion of the male

respondents were scholarship awardees. However, some studies have documented that females were better off academically, while some documented that gender does not play any significant role in academic performance.¹⁹⁻²²

Almost all the respondents supported the idea of the creation of part-time medical job position for medical students within the university hospital. The majority of the respondents prefer to take up the job position of a research assistant. Also, a good number of the medical students like to take up the job position of a surgery assistant. These findings are in keeping with the assertion that graduate assistantship is of immense benefit in improving both the theoretical and practical knowledge of participants.^{23,24} Research assistantships, laboratory assistantships, surgery assistantships, work of being a demonstrator or technician, are some of the opportunities for students to expand their theoretical knowledge in a practical environment like the hospital setting. It has been proven that undergraduates enjoy many benefits when they are actively involved in research works.²⁶⁻²⁸ In addition, experience acquired by students from active participations in assistantship works enlightens them more, this also play a significant role in influencing their career choice after undergraduate education.²⁷ If medical students are given these job positions in the university hospital, it will boost their intellectual capacity, skills acquisition and work experience, making them better doctors, employers and/or employees in the nearest future.²⁶⁻²⁸

From our findings, we observed that there exists varying level of importance attached to some, but not all, of the factors considered by both genders in their choice of a part-time job. For instance, many males considered emolument rates as one of the most important factors, whereas it was least considered by many females. This is similar to previous reports that remuneration has been reported to be of priority to medical students in their career choice,^{29,30} although in our study we noticed that concern for income is very dominant among the male medical students, but not that significant among the females. Both the males and females want to get engaged in part-time medical jobs in order to acquire new skills. However, many of them, both male and female, did not consider the warmth of a work environment as an important factor to consider when applying for such jobs.

From the authors' observation, virtually no medical student is engaged in an official part-time medical job in any of the research laboratories, clinics, and other scientific establishments within the University College Hospital (UCH) community. This may be attributed

partly to the nature of the medical curriculum which does not allow for any long vacation.¹⁵ However medical students in the United States do enjoy the privilege of getting hospital-based part-time jobs, through summer programs, to work as research or clinical assistants in various research laboratories, research institutes, and clinics.¹⁴

In Nigerian universities, the work-study program is a newly incorporated programme and it has neither been properly instituted nor fully explored.^{10,11} This programme needs to be explored to ameliorate the challenges of graduate unemployment in the country, as this approach tends to empower youths, medical students inclusive, by developing their business, administrative and managerial skills for a better future.^{10,31,32} Some researchers have also reported that medical doctors are not adequately skilled in entrepreneurship.^{33,34} In order to bridge this deficit in the future generation of medical doctors, medical students should be exposed to entrepreneurship in practicality, and in doing this, they should be given the opportunity to engage in part-time medical jobs in order to groom them for a future career in medical entrepreneurship.

In addition, many fresh Nigerian graduates are underemployed due to their lack of entrepreneurial and technical skills as a result of no prior work experience before their entry into the labour market.^{31,32} On the average, graduates that had prior work experience as students had higher chances of getting more comfortable jobs after leaving school, compared to their colleagues with no such work experience, and this is due to the fact that they have acquired some business and technical skills before graduation.²

This study had a limitation as we did not fully inquire the current source of funding of our study participants. This study also did not capture medical students in other classes and only 41.1% of the study population consented to be part of the study.

We recommend that part-time medical job positions should be created for medical students within the University College Hospital. If such job positions are created, it will be good if the students are given a regulated work permit not exceeding 16 hours/week, this is because research had shown that students that work for more than 16 hours/week tend to have a reduced academic performance.⁶ Also, a well-structured wage scale should be designed for such positions to encourage students in taking up such medical job positions.

CONCLUSION

Almost all medical students in this study had an interest in work and study. Many of the medical students were not satisfied with their level of income; hence they want to work to support themselves financially while a good number of them wanted to work so as to learn new skills for self-development.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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