

Factors That Affect Students' Decisions About Choosing Optometry as a Career. Narrative Review

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Summary

The purpose of this research is to learn about the perspectives of recent Indian optometry students on their professional route.

Methods: From 2005 to 2021, the phrases “optometry as a profession in India,” “career in optometry,” and “optometry in India” were searched in the PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases.

Results: The entire study is based on survey data. According to such studies, there were many more girls than boys. The majority of persons who took part in those studies agreed that there was a significant lack of awareness regarding optometry in the country.

Discussion: Optometry is a primary eye care profession that focuses on vision correction, ocular illness identification and prevention, and co-management of procedures involving the eyes. A variety of factors affect career selections. According to this review, students are impacted by a wide range of factors, including the course content, employment chances, societal reasons, individual goals, and peer pressure. Our analysis revealed that while the majority of students had heard of health-care professional programmes like medicine, dentistry, and nursing during their academic careers, but not optometry, only a small percentage of optometry students were aware of or knowledgeable about the profession before enrolling in the course.

Conclusion: In conclusion, our findings show that optometry knowledge and abilities were initially lacking among Indian students. Optometry is not frequently chosen as a first professional option in the neighborhood. Additionally, it is suggested that public education campaigns be run to inspire schoolchildren to choose a profession in eye care. The profession of optometry seems to be more appealing to women than to males. Personal objectives, course content, professional possibilities, financial benefits, and societal pressures are just a few of the factors that might affect someone's decision to pursue a career in optometry.

Keywords: Optometry students, carrier, profession, view points.

Introduction

The decision of a career is essential in shaping a person's life. Not only does it affect growth and happiness, but also personal happiness. An individual's job choices have a substantial influence on his or her chosen career and overall success in life. Since making the wrong professional decisions can have major effects on a person's life, most people exercise prudence while choosing their job route. Optometry is described as "a healthcare area that is autonomous, informed, and regulated" by the World Council of Optometry (WCO). An optometrist is the primary healthcare practitioner of the eye and visual system who provides comprehensive eye and vision care, including refraction and dispensing, detection and diagnosis and management of disease in the eye, and rehabilitation of circumstances of the visual system¹". Numerous individuals in India are unaware of the roles and responsibilities of optometrists in the healthcare industry since the scope and practice of optometry are still not well defined¹. Optometry was first taught in India 60 years ago, starting with a two-year course and eventually leading to a four-year graduate programme². In India, there are roughly 49,000 optometrists with four- and two-year degrees and 164 institutes that provide optometry education, according to a study released by the India Vision Institute in 2016³. The goal of this review study is to provide baseline information about the awareness, perception, and expectations of optometry

students from different parts of India. The decision to pursue a job can be influenced by a variety of variables, including personal interest, the likelihood of receiving a decent salary, and familial influence, when a parent or other relative suggests the field⁴.

One of the most important decisions one takes in daily life is choosing a decent career or vocation, and there are many factors that might influence this decision⁵.

In their study, Uchechukwu L. Osuagwu et al⁶. found that women were more inclined to choose optometry as a career than males, with men being more driven by new OD programmes, high salaries, and employment opportunities⁶. The education of optometrists in India prepares them to offer a wide range of eye care services, such as comprehensive eye exams, ocular diagnostic services, contact lens and eyeglass prescription dispensing, vision therapy, and visual rehabilitation⁷. According to the World Council of Optometry, Indian optometrists possess a high level of training and competence^{2,8}. They operate in a range of settings, including as academic institutions, optical retail stores, hospitals and clinics, as well as in marketing, administration, and independent private practises⁹. In all, these statistics demonstrate that India accounts for around 19.6% of the world's optometrists. The World Council of Optometrists estimates that there are about 358 training institutions and 250,000 optometrists worldwide^{2,8}. To the best of our knowledge, there is no current information on the popularity of optometrists in the country, despite the fact that this should be the case. There is little information available about the effects of prior job knowledge and attitudes, despite the fact that both efforts and self-efficacy are predictors of academic accomplishment. Students who actively choose their courses are more likely to succeed academically, but passive students are less likely to finish their degrees. This is because those who choose their courses with a clear professional aim are more likely to accomplish so^{10,11}. Students who liked the course they chose also had a higher chance of succeeding in their careers¹². The main goal of this narrative review is to know about the perspective of newly enrolled students in optometry course to know how

much they aware about their chosen profession. So that we may raise awareness among Indians about what optometry is and ensure that they are properly informed about optometry in the future. The curriculum must be created in a way that will inspire each student to learn the necessary skills and to perform them in a way that will support the continued growth of the optometry profession.

No of Optometry Colleges in all over the India³:

S. No	State	No. of Institutes
1	Andhra Pradesh	7
2	Assam	3
3	Bihar	4
4	Chhattisgarh	1
5	Gujarat	9
6	Haryana	2
7	Jammu and Kashmir	1
8	Jharkhand	1
9	Karnataka	7
10	Kerala	20
11	Madhya Pradesh	5
12	Maharashtra	23
13	Meghalaya	2
14	Nagaland	1
15	Punjab	2
16	Rajasthan	3
17	Tamil Nadu	18
18	Telangana	5
19	Tripura	1
20	Uttar Pradesh	18
21	Uttarakhand	1
22	West Bengal	14
	Total	149
S. No	Union Territories	
1	Chandigarh	3

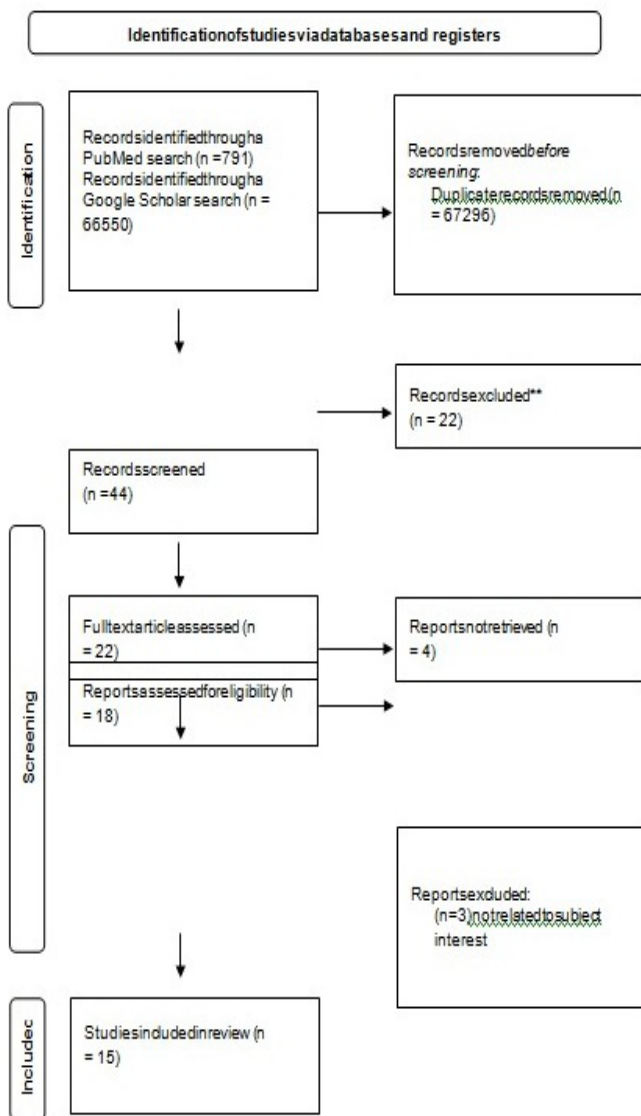
2	Delhi	12
	Total	15
	Total no. of institutes in India	164

Methodology

The article that precedes is a review article. Original articles featuring people who enrolled in optometry carrier were included in this evaluation. Through the use of the platforms of PubMed and Google Scholar, respectively, appropriate studies were found. The search was done in the PubMed, and Google Scholar databases from 2005 to 2021 using the terms “optometry as a profession in India,” “career in optometry,” and “optometry in India.”

15 papers were found to be eligible for critical investigation for this narrative review after titles and abstracts were thoroughly reviewed, duplicates were removed, and citations were carefully examined.

Figure 1 depicts how the papers were chosen.



The initial search found 67341 articles for all keywords, & 66296 duplicate were removed before screening. After comparing titles and abstract to inclusion and exclusion criteria and selecting 15 relevant journals, 22 were retrieved. 3 entries were later eliminated because they irrelevant to the topic.

Results

The research are all based on surveys. We discovered from those research that there were much more girls than boys. Our findings suggest that the decision to enroll in an optometry programme is multifaceted and depends on a variety of factors, including the student's personal goals, the course's objectives, employment prospects, income expectations, and other factors identified in previous research. The majority of respondents in those polls concurred that there was a serious dearth of knowledge about optometry in the nation. Maximum number of respondents concurred that there was a serious shortage of common understanding of optometry in the nation. After graduating school, the majority of participants learnt about the programme. A number of optometry students reported that when they first applied, their family members and other close friends mistakenly thought they were applying to ophthalmology school since they were unfamiliar with the subject².

Survey from northern India shows 152 responses, with 83 (54.6%) women and 69 (45.4%) men participating. The majority of students, 78(51.3 percent), come from urban areas, while 74(48.7%) come from rural areas¹. As a fresher optometrist, about half of students (52.6%), believe they should be paid between 25000 and 35000 Indian rupees. The availability of government jobs for optometry professionals was mentioned by 122 (80.3%) participants¹. Most students (126, or 82.9 percent) are aware that optometrists, ophthalmologists, and opticians are distinct professions, while 7 (4.6 percent) believe they are all the same¹.

Southern India shows that 42 responses were received, with 36 females (85.71 percent) and 6 males (14.28 percent). The students' most common reason for selecting the optometry

course was a general positive impression or opinion of the course (90 percent)¹³. The perception of good job opportunities abroad (85 percent) and in India (37.5 percent) was the second most important factor for choosing optometry as a career, while 72.5 percent believed they could start their own business. More than a third of respondents (40 percent) believed that an optometry degree could lead to a good salary or income. Only 5% joined because they had to be a part of the optometry family business¹³.

Western India study shows that 32 responses were received, with 21 females & 11 males². We discovered that most students stated the same things as other studies have also shown. The majority of students learned about the programme after completing their higher secondary education, and several optometry students mentioned that their family members and relatives were unfamiliar with the profession when they enrolled and also believed the candidate was pursuing ophthalmology training. All participants agreed that there was a significant lack of understanding about optometry in the society².

Eastern Indian results shows that 172 responses were received, with 97 females & 75 males. The most influential factors in choosing an optometry career are a good salary, professional prestige, and job availability. 74.7 percent (n=124) of respondents said it was important to participate in the induction day, 73.4 percent (121 students) said it was important to have previous working experience with an optometrist, and 89.75 percent (n=149) said it was important to have subjects passed and points obtained in each year to get a job after finishing the course.

Table 1: Responses from different parts of India.

Different Parts of India	No, of Responses (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
Northern India	152	69	83
Southern India	42	6	36
Eastern India	172	75	97
Western India	32	11	21

Discussion

The decision of a career depends on a variety of elements, not just one. Our study shown that a variety of factors, including the course itself, employment chances, societal causes, individual goals, and peer pressure, had an impact on students. Optometry training was first introduced in India in 1958The quality of optometric education and the range of practice drastically fluctuated in the past¹⁴. Optometry is a primary eye care profession concerned with vision correction, detection and prevention of ocular diseases, and co-management of eye-related surgeries⁴. A variety of factors affect career selections. This study discovered that, in addition to the course itself, professional chances, social reasons, personal goals, and peer influence, there are a number of other elements that have an impact on students.

Our analysis found that just a small percentage of optometry students were aware of or knowledgeable about the profession before enrolling in the course, during their schooling, The majority of learners were familiar with nursing, dentistry, and other health-care professions, but not optometry².

As technology seems to be a more male-dominated field, a survey done in the Netherlands found that just 17% of students are female who are enrolled in technology courses¹⁵.

Despite the course being incorporated in a specialty in medical technology, better literacy rates and a higher proportion of women working in this region of the world may be to blame for the higher number of women in optometry¹³.

Optometry students' perspectives of their profession changed after obtaining the appropriate academic and practical exposure to eye care. In those studies, the participants also reported that, in contrast to their preconceived notions, their family members, relatives, and classmates had a more positive image of the profession by the time they had started the course. After starting the course, the students were exposed to a range of optometry course components, which helped them understand more about the field's possible applications and normal clinical settings. According to a research by Thite et al⁹, Indian optometrists took part in a

wide range of services at eye clinics, retail optical shops, and community outreach programmes. A lack of early knowledge about optometry practice is shown in the inconsistent replies to the retrospective view of optometry. Additionally, senior optometry students had a greater understanding and knowledge of the employment options, variety of vision care services, and scope of practice than their junior counterparts. This further supports the idea that in order for students of optometry to understand the field's broader perspective, they need to be exposed to and guided through a variety of eye care services within the curriculum².

Conclusion

To summarize, our data indicate that students in India originally lacked knowledge and skills in optometry. The profession optometry is not frequently chosen as a first career option in the community. It is also advised that public awareness campaigns be carried out to encourage school children to pursue a profession in the field of eye care. Optometry seems to be a professional choice that appeals more to women than to men. Personal objectives, course content, professional possibilities, financial benefits, and societal expectations are just a few of the factors that might affect someone's decision to pursue a career in optometry. There are numerous optometry institutes in India nowadays, and all these studies indicate that girls are more prevalent in this profession than boys. However, there are no new publications addressing the reasons why boys are less interested in optometry. There are no studies that include the total Indian optometrist population; all of this research have been conducted in specific regions of the country. This is the main drawback of all of these studies is that they only apply to a few institutions of optometry, making it difficult to estimate how well-known and understood optometry is across the whole country. Due to differences in culture, education, environment, and language, perceptions are anticipated to vary from place to place within India². Additionally, Tertiary eye care institutions are more widespread in the country's urbanized and southern sections than in its rural areas, resulting in differing degrees of awareness across the country.

These research did not take into account the academic standing, language, gender, or cross-cultural characteristics of the participants. Therefore, it could be necessary to carry out a nationwide study to find out how well school children comprehend optometry. Furthermore, it is important to do studies to increase awareness of optometry among individuals who can have an impact on career decisions, such as family members, educators, and career counsellors. The results would suggest that there has been a substantial improvement in understanding future perspectives and practice patterns of the available optometry services thanks to the level of coursework provided by institutions². The findings also imply that in order to increase knowledge of the field, certified optometrists in the country should practice independently in each specialty, as is the case in developed nations².

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