

Career Planning of Pharmacy students in ASA University Bangladesh

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Abstract

In Bangladesh, Pharmacy is considered as a highly demandable subject in graduate level due to a guaranteed job after completion of graduation or post-graduation. A study was conducted among 45 students of B.Pharm program in ASA University Bangladesh to find out their career planning thoughts. They were asked some basic questions regarding the reasons for choosing Pharmacy at graduate level, type of jobs they prefer and qualities they think will help to prosper their career. 46.67% students think they have chosen Pharmacy to secure a job after graduation. 31.1% students are willing to work in pharmaceutical marketing sector whereas 40% students opt for production sector. 66.67% students think they are sincere to their duties and responsibilities which will help to perform better in job life.

Keywords: *Pharmacy, Graduation, Career, Pharmaceutical Marketing, Production*

Introduction

Career planning is the development of a systematic plan for growing a person's career in terms of responsibilities, skills and compensation. Thoughtful and self-reflective preliminary planning can make someone more effective at searching for, and choosing a career path that is right for him. Before someone starts looking in the classified ads, he or she has to be more certain that he or she knows the kind of job that is right for him or her. Obviously, not all pharmacy jobs are suitable for all pharmacists. So, a little thoughtful reflection before a person starts looking for his career will help assure him that he is considering the "right" job, not just "any job". While any career path can rely on circumstances or good fortune as guide, great careers rely on careful consideration and re-consideration of several career planning factors. Ultimately, only an individual can build a career that meets his or her needs and that gives job satisfaction.¹

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Objective of the study

This study aims at finding out what the students of Pharmacy at ASA University Bangladesh are thinking about developing their career. A total of 45 students were randomly selected who have already gained sufficient knowledge about future prospectus of Pharmacy in Bangladesh. These students have come from different economic background of our society. So, there was a clear variation in their thinking pattern regarding the choice of the career path which suits their needs. Moreover, their interest for studying Pharmacy varies from individual to individual, depending on their caliber. Not of all them are willing to get engaged in different job fields in our country, rather some of them want to go for higher studies in abroad. Apart from this, they have expressed keen interest in knowing the current status of pharmaceutical industries of Bangladesh. Finally, they were encouraged to think wise in choosing the right career from the very beginning of their study life.

Methodology

There are four steps in a successful career planning: ²

- **Self-Understanding:** Knowing someone's values, interests and passions
- **Exploring career options:** Talking to people in positions that seems attractive to a person
- **Obtaining the skills and credentials:** The desire to succeed in life
- **Attaining new skills:** To know about abrupt changing nature of the workplace.

The professional values are best described as the things that are considered most important in job life. A person's moral values are guides in light of which he lives his life and the reason behind the priorities he sets. His values are the criteria that he often uses while making decisions. One of the cardinal rules of strategic career planning is that his career choices must be consistent with his values. A pharmacist who highly values collegial interaction with other pharmacists will not thrive in a private practice environment where he or she does not interact with other pharmacists.²

Pharmacy, like health care in general, is constantly changing. Whatever aspect of Pharmacy encourages someone to learn new skills is obviously great. Learning new skills is the key to career satisfaction. Pharmacists are usually attentive to detail and work well within a defined structure. Yet, these same attributes can limit risk taking and learning something new. After all, learning means to know about something new, and knowing is keeping updated with current world.

A total of 45 students were asked some basic questions regarding their habits, values and interests in different aspects along with their current thinking pattern regarding job market in Pharmacy. These students were selected on the basis of their so forth knowledge about the job nature and job environment.

A set of questions were asked to the students regarding the following topics:

- Choosing Pharmacy to study at graduate level
- The sector in which they want to find a job after completion of graduation
- Type of family they belong to
- Evaluating Pharmacy as a suitable subject for an enriched career
- Going for post-graduation or getting involved in job after graduation
- Evaluating special characteristics that will help to perform better in job life

Although these set of questions does not entirely reflect what the students are thinking about their own career, this survey tries to find out some basic trends of career planning. Setting career goals is important because it gives a map, so to speak, on how we can direct our day-to-day work activities to allow us to reach our goals in the most directed way. Moreover, it is necessary to identify several career goals, and to divide them into short-term and long-term goals. By distributing goals into short-term and long-term categories, the individual who achieves success is directed towards completion of short-term goals, but never allows distraction from long-term goals to achieve in life.²

Career Planning Thoughts of Pharmacy students at ASA University Bangladesh

Questions asked regarding career planning	% of students
1. Why have you chosen Pharmacy to study at graduate level?	
A. To get an assured job after completion of graduation	46.67
B. To go abroad for higher studies	37.78
C. To get involved in research works after completion of graduation	20.00
D. No specific reason	8.89
2. In which sector you want to find a job after completion of your graduation?	
A. Pharmaceutical Marketing sector	31.11
B. Production sector of Pharmaceutical dosage form	40.00
C. Teaching Profession	15.56
D. No specific planning yet	15.56
3. Which type of family do you belong to?	
A. Higher class	2.20
B. Higher-Middle class	42.22
C. Lower-Middle class	4.44
D. Middle-class	51.11

4. Do you think Pharmacy is the suitable subject for an enriched career?	
A. Yes	77.78
B. No	0.00
C. May be	20.00
D. Don't have a clear idea	2.22
5. Do you want to pursue post-graduation or get involved in job after completion of your graduation?	
A. Yes	80.00
B. No	2.22
C. May be later	15.56
D. Not decided yet	2.22
6. How will you evaluate your career in context of your characteristics?	
A. I am very much hard working	6.67
B. I am sincere to my duties and responsibilities	66.67
C. I always try to rectify my flaws which I think will help me to work efficiently	13.33
D. I always take criticisms positively	15.56
7. As a person, how will you evaluate yourself?	
A. Optimistic	68.89
B. Pessimistic	6.67
C. Innovative	17.78
D. Lazy	8.89

Result and Discussion

1. Reasons for choosing Pharmacy at graduate level

In the Bangladesh perspective, pharmaceutical industries are growing very rapidly and most of them export various life-saving medicines in different countries of the world. There are near about 285 pharmaceutical industries in our country. So, there is a good chance that after completing graduation or post-graduation, Pharmacy students can avail a job in any of these industries. That is why, 46.67% students have chosen Pharmacy to get an assured job after completion of graduation. However, 37.78% of them have chosen this subject to go abroad for higher studies and 20% to get engaged in research works after completion of graduation. 8.89% have no specific reason for choosing Pharmacy at graduate level study.

2. Sectors of pharmaceutical industries students want to do jobs

In our country, there are mainly two sectors of pharmaceutical industries: production sector and marketing sector. In production sector, the major duties of pharmacists are to manufacture good quality medicines and to follow-up the entire manufacturing process. To work in this sector, a pharmacist must be efficient in handling raw materials and all the machineries needed to manufacture drugs. In graduate level of Pharmacy, there are ample opportunities to get proper training on handling different laboratory equipments like burette, pipette, HPLC-machine, tablet machine, autoclave etc. 40% Students who think they have the ability to handle these equipments and all the necessary laboratory methods which will help them to perform better in production sector have decided to work in factories.

On the contrary, there is another sector for the pharmacists to work: the marketing sector. Here, the pharmaceutical companies make promotion of finished dosage forms (tablet, capsule, syrup, injectables etc.) to the doctors because they are the “target customers” who prescribe medications to the patients. As a part of promotion, pharmacists have to prepare drug literatures (printed promotional materials) to explain unique features of their products to the doctors. For this purpose, they must have sound knowledge of the physiological and pharmacological features of the drugs; their mechanism of action, side effects, contra-indications, dosage guidelines etc. Not only that, they must have the ability to face the objections raised by the doctors. They must be smart in talking to the doctors and must have good command both in spoken and written English. 31.1% students think that they have good knowledge on pharmacology of different types of drugs and they are smart enough to handle all these situations that may arise in pharmaceutical marketing sector.

Pharmacy is an ideal field to develop career as a faculty member. If a pharmacist can make extremely good academic result in graduate or post-graduate level, the university authority may consider him or her eligible to be a part of the faculty member. No doubt, teaching is a prestigious profession. 15.56 % students have decided to build their career in teaching profession whereas rest of 15.56% has no planning yet.

3. Type of family the students belong to

In context of Bangladesh, socio-economic status has a great influence in making the choice of career. In our country most of the people belong to middle-class family. In most families, parents rely on the income of their children after they get engaged in job. Likewise, due to a guaranteed job in pharmacy, most of the students who have come from middle-class families have the urgency to get involved in job to run their family. According to this survey, 51.1% and 42.2% students belong to middle-class and higher-middle class families respectively.

4. Decision for making post-graduation or get involved in job after graduation

In Pharmacy, making post-graduation is always praiseworthy because it makes specialization of the students and makes them expertise in any particular field of study. 80% students opt for making post-graduation rather being involved in job just after graduation. 15.56 % may go for post-graduation in some later time.

5. Evaluating any special characteristics that they think may help to perform better in job life

There are many ideal characteristics that can help a person to perform better in job life. Being sincere to own duties and responsibilities plays a vital role to shine in job life. A person who is honest and sincere is sure to success, because honesty has its own reward. 66.67% students consider themselves sincere to their duties and responsibilities. 6.67 % think themselves hard-working and 13.33% think that they try to rectify their flaws which might help them to work efficiently.

6. Overall evaluation as a person

Personality and values together exert a strong influence on career choices. There are two types of people: introvert or extrovert. If a pharmacist is an extrovert, he or she can probably do well in an environment in which the job is customer-oriented (marketing sector). In contrast, a pharmacist who is introvert will probably retreat and avoid contact after a while and avoid establishing services that deal directly with customers. Thus, knowing both strengths and weaknesses will help to decide on a plan of action within his lifelong career. Once a pharmacist has sincerely assessed his values, interests, personality, strengths and weaknesses, he or she can begin to explore the career options in Pharmacy and try to match what they have found.² According to this survey, 68.89% students are optimistic, and they have positive thoughts about their life. 17.78% are innovative and have the spirit to invent something new in their job life. 6.67% are pessimistic and 8.89% consider themselves lazy.

Conclusion

The first key to success is to set career goals and to develop a career plan for achieving them. The first thing to remember is to be realistic with career goals and the time frame that is given by a person to achieve them. Being a pharmacist, if someone hopes to be successful in getting better job offers in future days, he or she will need to differentiate himself or herself from the typical Pharmacy graduate. He or she will need to *stand out from the crowd* and communicate his or her distinction in both their resume and job interviews.¹ By virtue of a good career planning, a pharmacist will be more likely to find him or her doing the things that make him happy in his job life.



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