

# Parental Preferences For Selecting A Medical College For Admissions In MBBS - A Deep Dive Into Key Perspectives And Priorities.

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## ABSTRACT:

**Objective:** The objective of this study is to explore and analyze parental preferences, perspectives, and priorities in selecting a medical college for their children's admission into the MBBS program.

**Methodology:** This interview-based, qualitative study conducted from Nov 2023 to March 2025 at different medical colleges of Lahore city. A semi-structured interview done to explore the perspectives and preferences of parents regarding prospective medical students. The sample size was calculated taking a confidence interval of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, which was calculated to be 294. A purposive sampling strategy was used to include parents reporting in the admission sections of three medical colleges for seeking their child's admission in MBBS undergraduate course.

**Results:** Altogether, 392 parents were interviewed individually in last 2 years, and interviewed. Among these, 299 parents (76.2%) responded well, and provided their perceptions regarding the choice of a medical college, whereas, 93 (23.8%) were reluctant to discuss. The most highly ranked factor which parents preferred in selecting a medical college for their child's admission was market reputation & overall ranking.

**Conclusion:** It is evident that the choice of a medical college is a multi-faceted decision, influenced by a diverse range of priorities extending beyond just ranking.

**Key Words:** Parental perspectives, Faculty expertise, Reputation, Medical colleges, Ranking order.

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## Introduction:

Embarking on the passionate academic track to become a MBBS doctor, is a life-altering decision, not only for the aspiring young and energetic students, but most importantly for their parents as well. The parents of these aspiring students have apparently the most crucial role in deciding their children's educational tracks, particularly in high-profile MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine & Bachelor of surgery) medical degree course. Although plentiful options are available for admission in a preferred medical college, the correct choice for a medical college becomes even more challenging as the considered choices narrow down. This study attempts to explore the key preferences of parents in selecting a medical college for their child's admission. Ideally, parents regard a medical college as suitable and high rank-

ing, which delivers updated medical knowledge, offers professional skills learning, and provides post-graduate job opportunities for their children to become a successful medical doctor<sup>1</sup>

Considering the impact and extent of parents' perspectives for admission in a medical college, it becomes imperative to know the overall number of aspiring candidates aiming to become MBBS doctors in the Punjab province. For the year 2025, Medical and Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT) conducted by the University of Health Sciences (UHS) across Punjab province, a total of 58,379 candidates appeared in the exam. In Lahore specifically, total candidates appeared were 16,390, among them 11,735 comprised of females and 4,655 males. Furthermore, the admission test was held across 26 centers in 12 major cities of Punjab, including Lahore (Daily Nation; 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept, 2024). This provides an overwhelming role of parents in selecting the right medical colleges for their children who have cleared this enormous bulk of entry test examination. In the same lines, for the year 2024, overall, 66,864 candidates participated in Punjab province, comprising 45,121 females and 21,743 males. Whereas, in Lahore, 19,014 candidates appeared in the entry test exam, with 13,259 females and 5,755 males (Daily Express Tribune; 11<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2023)<sup>2</sup>

It is crucial to understand the parents' perspectives regarding medical college selection essentially for three prime reasons. Firstly, it allows medical colleges to better understand their target MBBS students and formulate their recruitment strategies accordingly. Secondly, it enables the medical colleges to identify diverse areas of academic and infrastructural improvements and upgradation, in order to meet the parental expectations. Finally, understanding the parents' perspectives consequently helps to ensure a conducive environment between the students and the faculty and administration of a medical college, leading to improved academic performance and overall satisfaction<sup>3</sup>.

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It was observed in the last two years that parents typically employ a more holistic approach than solely relying on college rankings. This turns-out to be a high stakes decision, as it impacts not only the academic development but also shapes a student's professional trajectory.

To summarize, selecting a suitable medical college for their children's MBBS education, parents demand an evidence-based assessment of the institution's accreditation status, academic outcomes, clinical exposure, and overall learning environment. Interestingly, a definite focus on the nuanced perspectives of parents regarding admission process in the medical college, remains quite limited, including their specific concerns, high expectations of the medical colleges, and the factors they consider important.<sup>4</sup> This study aims to address this gap by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of these parental viewpoints and preferences.

#### **Methodology:**

This study employed an interview-based, qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives and preferences of parents of prospective medical students. The sample size was calculated taking a confidence interval of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, which was calculated to be 294. A purposive sampling strategy was used to include parents reporting in the admission sections of three medical colleges for seeking their child's admission in MBBS undergraduate course. Utmost efforts were made during data collection, to include parents from diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds so as to capture a diverse range of perspectives and preferences from the included parents.

It was ensured to prepare semi-structured interview guides for exploring key themes of the research study, which includes;

- Parents' determination and aspirations for seeking admission in MBBS course
- Perceptions and preferences of parents regarding selection of a medical college
- Parents concerns and reservations related to selecting a medical college for admission
- Factors influencing the decision-making and subsequently making a final decision
- Parents' expectations from the preferred medical colleges
- Their overall perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with becoming a medical graduate

All Interviews with the parents were carried in a comfortable setting in the admission sections of the medical colleges, after obtaining their verbal consent, and each interview extended from 15 - 30 minutes duration only.

The research included 5 medical colleges for the years 2024 and 2025. The parents reporting in these colleges were interviewed and data was obtained regarding their preferences and perspectives for admissions in medical colleges. Selecting the right medical college for their children for MBBS course, requires careful consideration and research, and this study takes a deep dive and encompasses the following parental perspectives observed during the academic years 2024 and 2025.

#### **Preference 1: Market reputation and overall ranking.**

Reputation of a medical college is paramount, as it is linked to quality education, rigorous curriculum and high accreditation ranking. A well-reputed medical college with a strong track record instills confidence and is often perceived as a safer bet for the future career prospects.<sup>5</sup> Par-

ents consistently prioritized the academic reputation of a medical college for making a decision.

#### **Preference 2: Campus infrastructure and facilities.**

Campus infrastructure and facilities is the second preference. One of the reasons why parents have been willing to consider is access to state-of-the-art infrastructure. The hostel facilities are very comfortable, the laboratories are modern and well equipped, the libraries are modern too; all these contribute in no small way towards bringing about a conducive learning environment. It is also good to the parents because they understand that the practical exposure and hand on training are necessary for their kids.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Preference 3: Fee Structure.**

In private sector, medical education is expensive and most parents consider the fee structure while they are evaluating their ward's admission fee. This is the reason why they tend to pick colleges offering lower tuition and financial aids. An honest fee structure and absent of hidden costs make it easier to make an informed decision regarding the medical college.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Preference 4: Accessibility and Location.**

Parents of female students were found to be influenced more by proximity to home than parents of male students. In Most parents preferred colleges in safe and secure locations and felt comfortable and accessible. In Availability of safe and affordable accommodation, transportation facilities and a relatively supportive community in the area supplemented this.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Preference 5: Well-established affiliated hospitals with job placements.**

Parents are naturally concerned about the future career prospects of their children. MBBS education is heavily reliant on clinical training. Parents mostly prioritized the medical colleges possessing strong affiliations with reputable and heavy turn-out hospitals, offering ample opportunities for students to interact with patients, participate in medical procedures, and gain practical experience in diverse specialties.<sup>9</sup> The volume and variety of patient exposure are considered extremely important for developing clinical competence and confidence. The availability of quality clinical exposure in affiliated hospitals has been a key consideration by the parents of prospective students.

#### **Preference 6: Faculty expertise; qualified and renowned faculty.**

It is found that students are likely to prefer areas closer to home and that the parents of female students are more likely to choose an area closer to home than the parents of male students. Explanation: modified the sentence to make it more natural and better understood. The colleges that were mostly found to be a priority for parents is one that was located in a safe and secure environment and was easily accessible. Availability of safe and affordable accommodation, transportation facilities and relatively supportive community in the area supplemented this preference.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Preference 7: Enhanced matrimonial prospects for female doctors**

Many parents perceived the attainment of a MBBS degree by their female offsprings not only as a major professional milestone, but also regarded this achievement as a strategic advantage in securing favorable matrimonial alliances and increased social status. This fact underscores the intersection of education and socio-cultural expectations in medical field.<sup>11</sup>

To draw findings, descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency, mean, standard deviation, weighted score and

rank order were examined and employed. To correct for the sampling bias, weighted scores for each reaction was calculated by multiplying their frequency with respective number and then adding all the numbers. Mean values were calculated by dividing the weighted score with the sample size. Rank order was figured out according to the mean value and weighted score. Each rank order value contributed proportionally to its assigned weight. The preferences having highest mean and weight score were ranked at 1st position. All results were tabulated in a descending order.

**Results & Discussion:**

Altogether, 392 parents were interviewed individually in last 2 years, and interviewed. Among these, 299 parents (76.2%) responded well, and provided their perceptions regarding the choice of a medical college, whereas, 93 (23.8%) were reluctant to discuss.

**Table No 1: Number of parents interviewed from Medical Colleges.**

Year	Medical College	Parents Interviewed (n)	Responded	Not responded
2024	Continental Medical College	71	58	13
2024	Lahore Medical & Dental College	67	49	18
2024	Rashid Latif Khan University Medical College	78	60	18
2025	Rashid Latif Khan University Medical College	74	58	16
2025	Rashid Latif Medical College	47	33	14
2025	Niazi Medical College	55	41	14
Total		N=392	N=299 (76.2%)	93 (23.8%)

The most highly ranked factor which parents preferred in selecting a medical college for their child’s admission was market reputation & overall ranking. This characteristic outweighed other factors perceived by the parents seeking admission in a specific medical college (WS=211). Market reputation of a medical college reflected a relative measure of the institution’s performance compared with other medical colleges.<sup>11</sup> Market reputation perceived by the parents was predominantly based on general perceptions and informal feedbacks, whereas, was considered a structured, most often quantitative comparison of performance between various medical colleges. Both these factors appear to be the key indicators of a medical college’s prestige and influence which parents and students choose for obtaining admission in MBBS course.<sup>12</sup>

This was followed by ‘infrastructure & facilities’ offered by a college, which was most important factor, ranked 2nd by the parents (WS=206). It was observed that infrastructure & facilities in a medical college actually represented the overall foundation which facilitates clinical skills and competencies and academic delivery offered by a medical college. Parents were overwhelmingly of the opinion that a

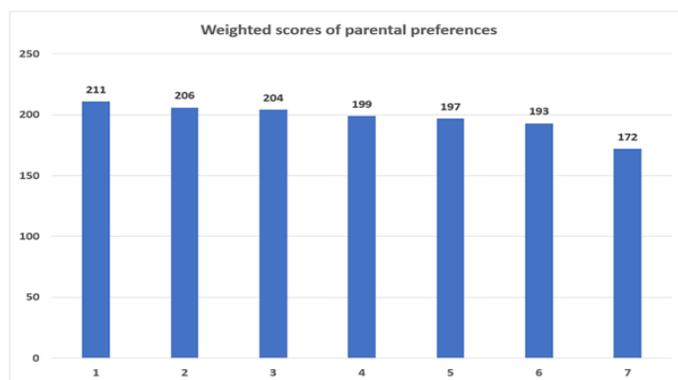
well-equipped medical college substantially improves learning experiences and provides quality clinical training to the medical students. Fee structure was the 3rd ranked factor perceived by the parents (WS=204). Interestingly, many parents placed the affordability of the college at their forefront regarding their decision to select a medical college for admission in MBBS course. It becomes evident from the study that financial burden of medical education is a vital and genuine concern for majority of parents seeking admission in a medical college. The study has highlighted that those medical colleges who offer and maintain a minimally balanced fee structure, which aligns with the quality of education, and simultaneously provide support mechanisms for financially constrained families of prospective medical students are preferred by a majority of parents seeking admission for their child. It becomes apparent that in an immensely competitive environment, affordability supplemented with quality education is a crucial factor in establishing the reputation of a medical college and subsequent student intake.<sup>13</sup>

Other preferences considered by the parents were ranked less but were not unimportant in selecting a medical college; Accessibility & location (WS=199), well-established affiliated hospitals & job placements (WS=197), qualified & renowned faculty (WS=193). Unprecedentedly, the 7th rank preference was enhanced matrimonial prospects (female doctors; WS=172), which matches with the increasing number of female students aspiring to become doctors.

**Table No 2: Summary of the statistics of parents’ preference while selecting a medical college (ascending order)**

Parents’ preference	Mean	±SD	Weighted score (WS)	Rank order
Market reputation & overall ranking	2.10	1.090	211	1
Infrastructure & facilities	1.96	1.086	206	2
Fee structure	1.93	0.967	204	3
Accessibility & location	1.90	1.010	199	4
Well-established affiliated hospitals & job placements	1.85	1.080	197	5
Qualified & renowned faculty	1.78	0.987	193	6
Better matrimonial prospects (female doctors)	1.69	0.851	172	7

**Figure-1; Weighted score of parental preferences**



**Literature Review:**

Exhaustive search for literature highlighting the parental was quite limited, particularly in the population we have focused in this study. It is evident that the choice of a medical college is a multi-faceted decision, influenced by a diverse range of priorities extending beyond just ranking.<sup>14</sup> Available literature in this domain has highlighted the central role of parental involvement in overall shaping their children's educational aspirations and selection of medical colleges.<sup>15</sup> In the context of medical education, parents predominantly act as key influencers, thereby providing financial and informational support. In the same lines, studies have highlighted enhanced levels of stress and competition associated with selection of medical colleges for admissions globally.<sup>16</sup> In addition, socioeconomic factors and access to quality medical education considerably influences parents' choices of seeking admission in a medical college.<sup>17</sup> The research highlights parental preferences as a crucial factor in opting a medical college for MBBS admission.<sup>18</sup>

Literature has stressed that the parental preferences are frequently influenced by a variety of factors including academic reputation, location, fee facilitation, overall safety, and college's infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> Typically, the parents have unanimously prioritized those colleges who possess a robust history of academic performance and updated teaching hospitals. Although accessibility was another crucial factor, especially in families where familial support is essentially considered, financial considerations and overall living expenses, also weighed heavily in decision-making by the parents.<sup>20</sup> It was also observed that some parents were highly influenced by social prestige associated with certain medical colleges, in addition to opportunities for postgraduation in opted field. A comprehensive understanding of these parental preferences is vital for medical colleges who aim to attract high merit prospective medical students and align their administrative priorities and offerings with majority of stakeholder expectations.

**Implications and Future Directions:**

Understanding parental preferences is crucial for medical colleges aiming to attract and retain top merit students. Institutions that prioritize these factors can significantly enhance their appeal and reputation, ultimately contributing to the success of their MBBS medical graduates.

Further research is required to explore the evolving dynamics of parental preferences, particularly in the context of emerging trends in medical education, such as technology-enhanced AI (artificial intelligence) learning, interdisciplinary approaches, and personalized medicine. Examining the influence of socio-economic factors, regional and cultural variations on parental choices can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and medical institutions.

**Conflict of Interest:**

No conflict of interest was observed in the study.

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