

Why more women are pursuing the ‘noble profession’

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Higher numbers of female students have entered and graduated from medical colleges **Dhaka Tribune/Mahmud Hossain Opu**

A new study shed light on the reasons why more women are choosing to become doctors, and some of the problems they are facing in carrying out their professional duties

Over the last decade, increasingly higher numbers of female students have entered and graduated medical colleges. Women are coming to dominate the field, despite many problems and challenges.

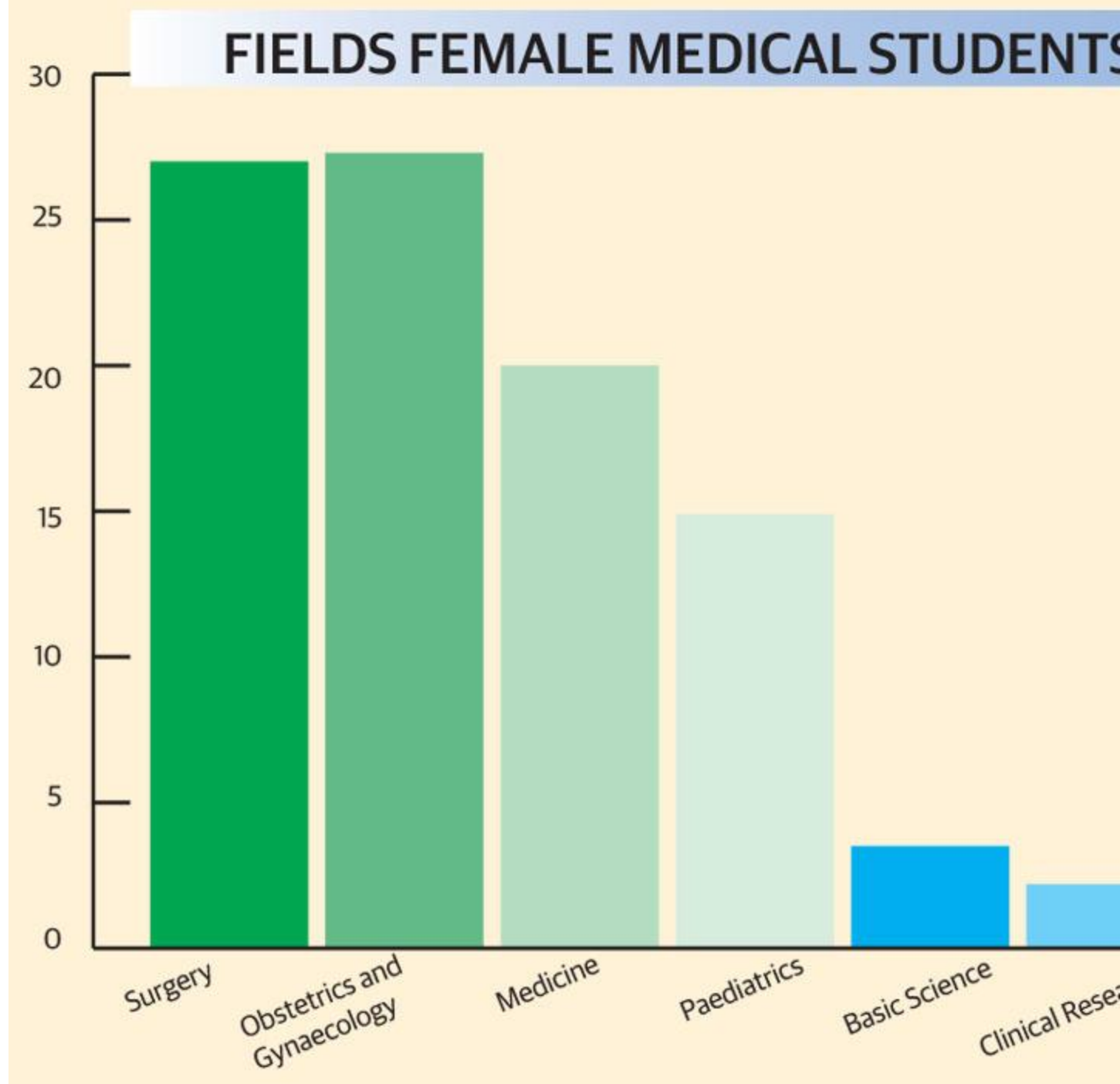
According to the Directorate General of Health Services, almost 60% of the 10,223 students admitted to public and private medical colleges this year are female.

A majority, or 52% of physicians registered between 2006 and 2015, are women. Women dominate the fields of obstetrics and gynaecology (96%), and paediatrics (57%).

A new study shed light on the reasons why more women are choosing to become doctors, and some of the problems they are facing in carrying out their professional duties.

The study, carried out by researchers from the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b), and Brac University’s James P Grant School of Public Health, interviewed 315 final year female medical students, and a number of parents and practising female physicians.

Social status (66%), respect for medical profession (91%), image of a 'noble profession' (91%), and prospects of helping common people (94%) were common motivating factors for them.



The overwhelming majority of female respondents in this study said serving a noble profession was a key reason why they became doctors.

In its analysis, the study said financial or job security came in as much less of a priority to these aspiring physicians.

“This may be due to the fact that in patriarchal societies like Bangladesh, financial responsibility for raising and maintaining a family is viewed as the sole purview of men. So, it is assumed that women are less concerned about financial return from the profession unlike their male peers,” it said.

Parents interviewed also expressed preference for the altruistic nature of the profession.

They also said diverse work opportunities in the medical profession offer an important advantage to women for working independently in their field of choice, giving attention to family if necessary.

TOP 10 REASONS WHY WOMEN CHOOSE

Respect earned

Opportunity to help people

Noble profession

Contribution to society

Childhood dream

Financial security

Social status

Job security

Study science

Parental pressure

Challenges faced

The main difficulty the students perceived was the condition of housing in remote postings. From anecdotal evidence from their seniors in rural jobs, they perceived rural living arrangements to be inadequate (congested, dirty, insecure), and therefore, not suitable. Administrative issues were mostly reported by public medical college students, but the social security issue was reported by both public and private medical college students.

Gender disparity in work, career, and work environment, especially in rural areas, and problems of work-home balance, were a few of the challenges mentioned which made some of them drop out. Also, these circumstances drove them to crowd into a few selected specialties, and is holding back the health system from delivering needed services.