

Doctors without Clarity: The State of Indian Students at the Medical Universities in Former USSR Bloc Countries

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Abstract

According to the Indian Embassy website in Moscow, it is mentioned that around 5000 Indian students are enrolled at Russian Universities, mostly for studying human medicine but many also go to Russia to pursue engineering and specifically aeronautics related fields. Russia has never been a popular choice amongst Indian students aspiring to pursue higher education abroad. According to an India today magazine article, the most popular choices for Indian international students to pursue higher education are in North America, Western Europe and Australia respectively. But there is scope for Indian students in Russia. Everything from the admission process to the quality of education and life while in the country are quite different and unique compared to the popular choices mentioned above. In this paper, I am focusing on the living and learned experiences of Indian medical students in Russian medical universities. Medicine is taken up as a profession for various reasons and in this paper, I am going to explore in detail, the causes behind every reason stated by the current students whom I have interviewed who are studying in different medical universities across Russia. My aim is to find out why they have chosen Russia to pursue their higher studies. As my own argument in the paper, I will try to relate the experiences of students to showcase how cultural and gender based violence are involved behind the scenes. The second argument I am going to make is that medical profession is a holistic profession and students need to feel a genuine calling and passion towards the profession to succeed in it later on, medicine is not purely based on reason and logic and a student needs to be intuitive beyond an average person to work under such strenuous conditions in a pain filled environment like a hospital. Lastly my third argument is that healthcare has been turned into an industry and any industry by default works for its own profits more than for the welfare of the people and their greater good. Even if they are providing vital care in life threatening situations, every step of the way has been commercialized in today's time which is consequently degrading the comprehensiveness of the medical profession overall.

Keywords : Indian medicos in Russia, Doctor, Cultural Violence, Relativism, Parental Pressure, Stigma, Mental Health, Foreign Education, Practicing medicine as a business, Motivations, Causes, Intentions, Masculine Hegemony, Cross-cultural barriers, Study Abroad Agencies, Grounded theory, Systemic social injustice, lack of conscience



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Introduction

A clear understanding of basic moral science and ethical values are slowly disappearing in this generation. Young adults are unable to think individually because every aspect of human life is being commodified more and more on a daily basis. Amidst this, due to globalization and in the age of social media, cross cultural relations have increased tremendously both for good and bad I would say. However, prejudices persisted and continue to persist that are being held for generations and are honourably passed on as heritage. Systemic issues like patriarchy and violence are still ongoing. These prejudices are not only hindering advancement in social and political though amongst youth, but are as well causing mental health issues and deep confusions in both their personal and professional lives.

Background

National Eligibility and Entrance Test (NEET) Situation in India

In September 2021, Tamil Nadu Government passed a bill to abolish the National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) in their state and directed that medical students would be admitted on the basis of their performance in Class 12th. After Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra government has also decided to review the exam and have a re-look at the government's authenticity and the quality of student's education passing the 12th grade. The general dislike towards NEET is not new and is persistent for years, various state governments have shown some level of reluctance towards the exam.

Tamil Nadu, for one is certain that the exam is 'anti-poor' because without receiving intensive training at a formal coaching centre, candidates cannot think of doing well, let alone acing the exam and getting an admission into MBBS. The exam is conducted in multiple choice format and many students find this discouraging. Ironically, the exam's 'objective' nature is also looked upon favourably by those who say it calls for less corruption and malpractices.

Wardha based doctor Shadab Moosa, MD, said in an interview with NDTV in November 2019 that "simply doing away with NEET doesn't go hand in hand with the New Education Policy of 2020. NEET is an objective-based exam and every student has an equal opportunity to crack this exam because it's an objective assessment rather than a subjective one. Every teacher has a different way to assess the subjective answers but for objective, all answers are the same hence the assessment will be fair."

A NEET coaching faculty said, "NEET exam sets a level of academic assessment that 12th board cannot match. NEET will help students to get a better understanding of the medical field and brighter students can think of a better future. If NEET is scrapped, there are chances of increase in corruption which is unjust as far as the medical field is concerned."

Dr. Prasad Jadhav, faculty of The Institute of Chemistry said in an interview with Times of India that, "Cheating is rampant when it comes to board exam. Therefore, not every student who gets admission to medical institutions on the basis of 12th marks is worthy of it. NEET brings out better students who will become good doctors in the future because the exam is also conducted well."

In the next section, I am going to explain about the mental pressures and trauma that the students face who are aspiring to clear NEET and get admission into MBBS. The maximum attempts allowed per candidate are three and in the given attempts, aspiring students need to secure a rank in order to secure admission into MBBS.



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According to an article in shiksha.com published February 2018, the National Eligibility and Entrance Test conducted by the Medical Council of India is held in August every year. The NEET exam is a paper based test with 180 multiple choice questions from the subjects Botany, Zoology, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Moral Science. The question paper is provided in 13 languages including English, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi, Odiya, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu and Punjabi. With over 1.5 million candidates sitting the exam every year, the competition is very high. The chances of securing admission on merit basis does not only rely on the marks secured by the candidate in the NEET exam and grade 12th, they vary according to the religion and caste of the candidate. The reservation system almost makes it impossible for candidates in the general category to secure admission into MBBS in a University in India. For this reason, many aspiring students look forward to pursuing their education elsewhere in foreign countries.

Speaking of medical education, the tuition fees for studying Bachelors in Human Sciences is similar in all the countries across the world. In other words, if a student is not getting admission on merit in India, going abroad is not seen as the next best thing to do because studying to be a doctor in a foreign country is a costly affair for most of the families to afford. On average, according to shiksha.com, it costs about 60,000 dollars per annum to study Bachelors in Human Sciences in developed countries like in North America, in the EU or in Australia. Being able to afford the tuition is just not enough because the schools in the developed countries are highly advanced and competitive in the advancement of knowledge so a person needs to be self motivated to sustain school in the first world countries. These factors are well known and thoroughly understood by the students and families in the Indian subcontinent. These factors combined have given scope for the Indian students to look towards second world countries for higher education in medical sciences like Russia, Ukraine and even China. Before going on to depict the experiences of Indian students in Russian Medical Universities, I will explain the religion and caste aspect associated in the NEET, which is also applicable to all other fields as well. I will argue that the reservation system has long outlived its purpose when it was first implemented by Dr. BR Ambedkar who penned the Indian constitution. Even if the implementation of caste system was beneficial for minorities initially when India achieved independence from British Raj, over the years, the loopholes in the system have been systematically abused for illegitimate purposes for keeping the class divide and status quo still in place to this day by the ruling class in India.

According to the Medical Council of India website, a total of 8,70,074 candidates have cleared the exam for admission to undergraduate medical courses in 2021 out of 1,544,275 who took the exam, as against 1,614,777 registered candidates. Compared to 2020, 1.77 lakh more candidates took the exam in 2021. Also more candidates were registered this year as compared to 2019 and

2020, when 1,519,375 and 1,597,435 candidates were registered respectively. The result of 15 candidates has been cancelled for adopting unfair means. Keeping with the past trend, more women candidates qualified NEET as against men. Of the total qualified candidates, women account for 56.8 %, up from last year's 55.46 %. The share of women among successful candidates was 57.11 % in 2019. Among the top 20 candidates there are two women Karthika G Nair and Vaishnavi Sarada from Maharashtra. Category-wise break-ups of the qualifying candidates show that 13.12 % were Scheduled Castes (SC's), 45.6% Other Backward Classes (OBC's) and 4.61 % Scheduled Tribes (ST's), as against last year's 12.8 %, 46.59 % and 4.38% respectively.



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This is the situation of the NEET exam in India. For the above reasons and for the affordability of tuition costs in Russia and its neighbouring countries, many Indian students who have qualified in the NEET exam but could not secure admission due to any of the reasons have been travelling to Russia to study Medicine with a lot of hope and by gathering the strength and required resources. Surprisingly as one can see, the storage in number of admissions that can be afforded by the Indian Government and private universities included together are still falling short, compared to the number of aspirants and the demand. However, great precautions need to be considered if deciding to go to Russia for higher studies. Though the quality of education in health sciences in Russia is on par with that of the education in the developed countries, cultural and language differences makes it tougher for the students to adjust and successfully complete their education in Russia. Before opening on the student interview I conducted for the research methods class which I took with my guide in Summer 2021, I want to discuss about the details of studying medicine in Russia and the admission procedures for students coming from India.

Bachelor of Medicine Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) in Russia

The duration of MBBS in Russia is 6 years. International students who decide to study MBBS in Russia with the medium of instruction as English are required to undergo a one year of preparatory course prior to starting their MBBS course. The Health Ministry in India has released a statement that any Indian candidate wishing to pursue medical education from any foreign destination will have to appear and qualify for the NEET exam. The Ministry of Health made it mandatory into affect since May 2018.

According to Moxsh Education Abroad Agency website, the average cost of studying MBBS in Russia is around 4000 USD per year. That roughly translates to 2,75,000 Rupees for a course which is 6 years long, totalling 24000 USD, tuition and administrative fees to be paid in USD only. MBBS in Russia for Indian Students brings to the table, a high-class education imparted by highly skilled professors. Candidates have to attend the one-year preparatory course in Russian since you are opting for an English-taught MBBS program. The Russian MBBS program lasts for 6 years including the practical training. In this course of 6 years, a candidate will study the

Russian language for 6 semesters and physical training for 10 semesters in their course of study. According to the Indian Embassy Website in Moscow, a few scholarships available for international students studying medicine in Russia are ; The Government of Russia Federation Scholarships which is the state-level scholarship that is provided to the students to study MBBS in Russia. This scholarship covers their tuition fees, accommodation costs including the maintenance allowance amounting to around 1300 Rubles – 1500 Rubles per month. Other scholarships include Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarships and medical educational grants from the student's registered universities.

Coming to the language of instruction, even as a student registered to be taught in English medium, it is mandatory for every student to participate in language, cultural and physical training activities provided by the university and mandated by the Government of Russia. There exists an aggressive propaganda in India about English medium courses in medical studies in the Russian Federation, which is largely untrue. Medium of instruction in Russian higher educational universities is mostly Russian, and this is also true in the bigger cities as well. Some Universities are clear about this and have this mentioned on their websites where as some universities do not mention this point as clearly. A special license is required by the institution to teach in English, which is issued by the Government. In practice, most institutions teach the



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first three years in English alongside Russian language. It is expected of the students to be able to fully converse and communicate with their patients in the clinics in the Russian language. Students are not fully informed of this dual medium of instruction at the time of the application process which is the root cause of the confusion and that can have cause severe consequences later on in student's life. It is somehow left as taboo to deal with later on, but this gap in communication and being unclear of the ground realities in Russia is challenging many students to struggle, adapt and to successfully complete their education in given time. Some institutions which claim to fully offer education in English medium on their websites do not even have requisite faculty to teach in English and not to forget, this is about human medicine. Indian Embassy in Moscow mentions that no books on medicine in English are available in the Russian libraries. Though all books are available online, it is important to have most basic books like Harrison's anatomy or Merck's Manuel on hand in paperback form for the convenience of learning and applying the knowledge in person and to practice.

Theory and Conceptualization

Jack Donnelly explains in his work "Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights" published in Human Rights Quarterly Journal (November, 1984) that cultural relativity among different cultures of human beings is an undeniable fact (Donnelly, 1984, pp-400). He argues that moral rules and social structures witness an astonishing cultural and historical variability. Donnelly defines cultural relativism as a doctrine that holds that some variations should be exempt from any legitimate criticism from the outsiders (Donnelly, 1984, pp-400). This doctrine strongly supports the notions of cultural autonomy and self determination. Donnelly further argues that moral judgements seem to be essentially universal, as suggested not only by Kant's categorical imperative, but also by the common sense distinction between principled and selfinterested action (Donnelly, 1984, pp-400).

This brings me to conceptualize the above theory and relate it with my paper. As Donnelly mentioned above that if certain variations coming from a specific cultural understanding needs to be exempt from any criticism by the outsiders, then without properly understanding the intricacies of any foreign culture, how can anybody coming from outside learn and understand about how they understand and practice human medicine. As I have mentioned in the beginning, medicine is a holistic profession and cultural differences are bound to spill into the understanding of what is ethical and what isn't. In some cultures, euthanasia is okay but it is certainly not in many dominant cultures. Other medical procedures like surrogacy, artificial implants, Gender transformation procedures, and many more are very closely related to culture, customs and traditions which are almost unquestionable by youth in their late teens or early 20's. Without having a clear understanding and conscience of many of these issues if not all of them, a stark cultural difference experienced at such young age might very well cause a cultural shock among the foreign students which is clearly detrimental for their mental health. Students going to become doctors shouldn't come back home as patients who will need help themselves. This is the injustice. Let me share about the pressure coming from parents from here on. Before that, I will use the theory on Cultural Violence by Johan Galtung to later conceptualize it.

Johan Galtung defines cultural violence as "Any aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (Galtung, 1990, pp-291). He argues that cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even



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feel, right—or at least not wrong (Galtung, 1990, pp-292). He goes on to say that just like political science is about two problems—the use of power and the legitimation of the use of power, violence studies are also about two problems, the use of violence and the legitimation for its use.

Galtung sates that “the psychological mechanism behind could be the internalization of fear” (Galtung, 1990, pp-292). From what Galtung says, I understand that direct and structural violence are made acceptable in the society and used to tame children to live with these systemic issues through legitimizing cultural violence, and is enforced by parents and extended family members to comply or be cut off, I mean they are left out to lead an isolated life.

Galtung argues that “A violent structure leaves marks not only on the human body but also on the mind and the spirit. The next four terms can be seen as parts of exploitation or as the reinforcing components in the structure. They function by impeding consciousness formation and mobilization, two conditions that are required for effective struggle against exploitation. Penetration, implanting the top-dog inside the underdog so to speak, combined with segmentation, giving the underdog only a very partial view of what goes on, will do the first job. And marginalization, keeping the underdogs on the outside, combined with fragmentation, keeping the underdogs away from each other, will do the second job. However, these four should also be seen as structural violence in their own ways and right and more particularly as variation on the general theme of structurally built-in repression. They have all been operating in gender contexts - even if women do not always have higher mortality and morbidity rates but in fact may have higher life expectancy than men, provided they survive gender-specific abortion, infanticide and the first years of childhood. In short, exploitation and repression go hand in hand, as violence, but they are not identical.” (Galtung, 1990, pp-296)

Clearly in this context, underdogs are the students and to an extent their parents as well, and the top dog is the culture and the system. Students have an idea of sorts about what they are getting into, parents are left with assumptions and preconceived notions of what it might be, but clearly the education and training that the students receive and including all the ground realities with all the details that nobody seems to precisely understand is making them play a huge gamble with their futures. There needs to be clarity of thought and a decent grit in medical students to become successful doctors. If such level of confusion and uncertainty persists, again I argue that it is not at all good for the mental health and conscience building among these students.

In the following section, I am going to elaborate on the parental pressure faced by the students in

India to pursue medicine in their careers. I will relate the same to what I have quoted from Galtung’s work above, which is cultural violence and later make a connection to Donnelly’s work to show how cultural violence is veiled in the name of cultural autonomy and self determination, keeping the hegemonic practice in place.

Cultural Violence in the from of Parental Pressure

I will share my own experiences in life to showcase the overall pressure that medical aspirants face in India. Starting at an early age, as early as when they are in primary school, kids get questioned on what they aspire to become when they grow up. If the kid naturally answers that he wants to be a doctor or an engineer, it kicks off for celebrations. However, as with most of the kids, if the answer is ‘I don’t know yet’, they are brainwashed into thinking that engineering and medicine are the ultimate professions to pursue when they grow up. This is at least reminded to the kid once in a day, either at home or in school or at both places. Secondly, if



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the parents are doing well in life themselves, say doctors, engineers, chartered accounts, lawyers and so on, the kid is forced to look up to their parents and imagine them as their role models. On another note, if the parents are not doing as well, say they are clerks, small business owners and so on, such kids constantly hear at home and school that if they don't become an engineer or a doctor in their lives, they are inevitably going to end up as their parents who cannot afford any luxuries in life and always struggling to make their ends meet. Consequently, children grow up with this very strong thought in their minds that if they don't become an engineer or a doctor in their lives, they are just a waste of life.

K12 schooling in India

Like I mentioned above, these thoughts become a vital part of their identities in children's lives and the training for Entrance exams begin as early as when they reach middle school, which is 6th grade. Social sciences which include History, Civics, Geography, and Moral Science subjects are given least importance in the curriculum. Needless to mention, Mathematics and General Science receive maximum focus, and both at home and in school. The personality of a child and their individual identity is only measured with the marks they receive in Maths and Science and nothing else. If the kid is genuinely enjoying Math and Science, good for them, they are pushed to always come first in class, but God forbid if the kid is not doing well in Math and Science, they not only face insults and beatings at home, but they are labelled as losers in school as well. Coming to the Arts, it is taught from a very young age, even if parents are artists themselves or the kid has inclination, they are thoroughly brainwashed out of the inclination or some generous parents could allow them to take it up as a hobby but they are severely looked down upon if taken as a profession. The question of dignity kicks in and insults follow and keep on going until the kid commits a crime or loses their spirit. Moreover, every single aspect of life is seen as a competition in the Indian culture. Competition with self, with siblings, with friends, with cousins, with extended family and just about anybody in the world at large. This mindset strongly resembles with Protestant Work Ethic in Christianity. This kind of upbringing dehumanizes the spirit in the children.

Now that I have touched upon cultural violence and cultural relativism above, and tried to conceptualize it, I hope it is somewhat clear as to why so many Indian children are aspirants of becoming engineers and doctors. From here, I am going to speak of the one interview I conducted of an Indian Student who studied medicine at Ivano-Frankivsk State Medical University in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.

When I asked him what made him choose this specific school and country to pursue his medical degree, he was clear and right away said that it was affordable for him and his family and that he aspired to be a doctor since he was a child. I asked probing him, was it his choice to become a doctor or was he brainwashed into believing that it is the most respectable profession in the world and so on? He laughed and said that his father is in service in the Indian Army and that it was his own choice truthfully to become a doctor. Furthermore, he said that though he qualified in the NEET exam, as he is coming from a higher caste, his score in the NEET was not enough to secure admission in any of the universities in India. Therefore he decided to pursue his higher education abroad. Now, I asked him to walk me through the sequence of events from this point to his admission into Ivano-Frankivsk. He mentioned that his search began from Google. After researching, he selected a study abroad agency called Moxsh Education Abroad Agency and booked an appointment with them to go meet them in person and discuss further details. When he walked into Moxsh office and after giving and receiving greetings, the agents began to ask him a few questions. I probed again and asked him, what



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were the kind of questions he was asked if he could remember any. He said, he remembered the first question being on his NEET score and the second was on his budget. Immediately, my interviewee was being given options to choose from. He mentioned that the aforementioned universities were situated in Russia and later he was being given options to choose from Ukraine. I probed again to ask if these were the only two countries that were provided in the options or there were more. He remembers options being presented from Georgia, Armenia, Kazakstan, Philippines and China. I told him that this sounded like a buffet platter for which he laughed out loud and said, it is somewhat like that. I asked him what was the one major difference among studying and staying in these countries mentioned for which he answered, quality of education and life. I asked him to elaborate more. He said the higher the budget, the better the quality of education, the accommodation, amenities etc.

I understood that he zeroed on Ivano-Frankivsk solely depending on his budget, which he was clear about from the get go. I asked him how did he believe in the quality of education and general safety in Ivano-Frankivsk, to which he said he made friends through social media before going there. As well, he mentioned that he did a thorough research on the reputation of the university he was going to attend. He further mentioned that he has read almost everything published about Ivano-Frankivsk in general and later proceeded with his gut feelings. He proudly mentions during his interview that he is now working as a recruiter for his university along with various consultancies in India, as a side hassle, but he works as a resident doctor at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi, India.

Next thirty minutes into the interview, I asked him about the life outside university campus and in general. He mentioned that Indians are very much liked by the people in Ukraine and even in Russia. Locals like the dressing, food, history, politics and religious aspects practised in India and that it is very safe if focus on studies could be sustained by the student and not get too involved and get personal with anyone. He said that if a student is genuinely motivated to become a doctor, his university or any university could provide them with world class education.

Methods of Data Collection

Most of my research is based on discourse analysis of secondary data. Data that I drew from the Embassy websites, University websites, magazines and scholarly articles. For the interview I conducted, I made contact with my interviewee through social media (facebook). I messaged him on the facebook messenger app saying that I am a social researcher and writing a qualitative major research paper about the learned and lived experiences of Indian medical students in Russian Universities. He did not respond to my message for a week or so, so I messaged him again saying that the information he is going to provide me will only be read by my Professor and that there will not be any harm caused to him for giving me an interview about his experiences. He then responded asking me how I got his contact and why did I decide to message him and ask for an interview. I responded to him that I messaged many students who I could find on facebook. Before searching for individual profiles, I searched for Indian students groups on facebook and linkedIN studying in Russia. I selected a few students and messaged them randomly, hoping to receive a reply. My interviewee was pleasantly surprised to know that I am conducting a random sampling. I explained to him that because we are going through a pandemic and that my topic of research is about Indian medical students in Russia, I would have done my research more thoroughly if only I was in India at present or could travel to Russia for conducting participant observation, focus groups and one on one in person interviews. He was convinced with my response and we slowly build trust after this



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conversation. I had to be very subjective and precise to win over his trust to give me an interview. I did not lie to him a single time through the process which is the ethical standard expected of a social researcher, as explained by my professor. My interviewee was not done with his questions. He asked me to explain my exact purpose behind this research and what is in there for me. I was taken aback with this question momentarily, and asked him 2-3 days time to get back to him with my answer. Upon getting back to him, I explained the nature of my studies to him in detail. I said I am studying Master of Education in Social Justice Education, a branch of study in International Development and Affairs where we focus on global, national and local socioeconomic and political systems and cultures and analyze how differences amongst people of various economic strata are maintained. In doing so, we try to recommend solutions in the form of policy changes and practices to be adopted by future Governments, corporations and NGO's to make the whole game more fairer than it is right now. The interviewee asked fairer in what sense? I responded fairer in every aspect as in the focus on children's upbringing needs to shift towards building their personality and character rather than teaching them long held prejudices and on how to safeguard their privileges. This is because prejudices and traditions that are discriminatory in nature were not brought into practice by people living on Earth today. If a kid is born into poverty or privilege is not a choice that they make and have power to make a decision, and in that sense, why is life mostly a bed of roses for privileged class and a daily struggle for the poor?

My interviewee was convinced with my answer and we proceeded with his interview.

Scope of my research

The scope to conduct research on this particular topic is as wide as the Russian Federation geographically on the world map. However I confined my research to secondary data and a single interview because I am only focusing on developing a research idea. My Professor has instructed me to develop a solid research paper with the main headings of a research paper included and logically put together regardless of its length. Madam has also instructed me to not go too deep into the analysis and interpretations as this is the beginning of my career and I am only being assessed of my capability to fully develop a research idea through this paper. It took me time to understand my Professor's instructions but once I clearly understood what is being asked of me, I did not have a doubt about what to write and how much.

Limitations in my research

Physical distance is the first limitation. This research idea could have been developed ten fold only if I was able to meet my interviewee in person and further could have made it stronger if I were able to visit at least one of universities in Russia where may be a good number of Indian students are enrolled. Confining this topic of research to secondary data analysis and one interview on WhatsApp video was not enough for me. Again, this is how much I was instructed by my Professor to do, so I did just as much. Second limitation is the timeframe. My interviewee, though he gave me an interview for about an hour, he rejected to give me a second interview when I requested him. This I think is because I could not meet him in person the first time to establish a better relationship and trust with him, and then he is also busy serving patients in the hospital and during a pandemic. It was just a hectic time for everybody. Third limitation in my research is gap in information. This means the information provided on the



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university websites is insufficient and does not necessarily match what the websites of study abroad agencies in India mention. The vacuum created due to gaps in information was hard to navigate and therefore I call it a limitation.

Interpretation of my findings

I really appreciate that countries in the former USSR bloc are providing world class education to foreign medical students including the Indians. I like that the programs offered at these universities are affordable and the places are as well generally safe, except for the universities in towns that are close to the Russia Ukraine border. I would say for that matter, even in Canada and the US, only larger cities and towns are considered safe for foreign students and workers. Rural places in the country side are as well safe if threaded with caution. However, for a medical student especially going from India, I found that it is safer to choose bigger cities as people are more likely to understand English and would make their studies a little easier and comfortable. I would also say that students need to be clear of their choices and foremost, never forget why they have travelled to Russia or Ukraine in the first place. It is understood that there will be many distractions which will look hopelessly attractive. However a clear conscience and clarity of thought is to be maintained by the student to reach their end goal and safely go back to India upon completion of their studies.

Conclusion

Aspiring to become a doctor in life is a noble thought in my opinion and understanding. It means that the person is not able to see the suffering around them and want to actively work towards reducing the suffering of others. When such intentions and thoughts are truly the inner voice of a person, if the inner voice almost feels like a calling, then it should be understood as some divine force talking to you to proceed in the direction. This voice can be intuitively understood by a person from their childhood or it might flash in the most unexpected places, time and contexts. The most important thing here is to never ignore that inner voice if it is talking to you. Some people hear it clearly since their childhood or some might have to spend time on meditation, yoga and other spiritual practices which may suit them to channel the voice. I strongly believe and know that any person following their inner voice in life is divinely protected. The inner voice however will never give hunches on material things and/or in gambling say lottery tickets. I mean to say that the inner voice always works if a person is being called to be of service to humanity at large. To be of service to humanity at large, it is a prerequisite to shed off prejudices and preconceived notions. Just as it is mentioned in the hippocratic oath, a doctor should only see the patient in pain and should not care about their religion, caste, creed, socioeconomic status, political orientation, sexual orientation, nothing at all. A human being should be seen as human being that's all. This more or less should be a mandate for medicos and lawyers, aid workers and Professors, or any profession that is perceived to be holistic. But in India, caste system is itself based on the profession and this is what causes cultural violence amongst people. Traditionally Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and other minorities were not allowed to attend universities. Knowledge was cut off from them systematically and in a discriminatory manner. Instead of holding this prejudice and following this age old system, we need to work on updating it.



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All the discriminatory laws and practices need to be abolished in India first and every child in the country needs to receive a somewhat similar quality and level of education. Then once they are at a pre-university level, the entrance exams need to be held in a question paper format which is both subjective and objective. The question on Moral Science need to be given as much weightage as the questions in Maths and Science. More Universities need to be opened to meet the demand and be accessible by default. Money should not be given importance, only merit should be given. People cannot corrupt merit in my observation, money is the root cause of corruption I would say, if any of the above suggestions are taken into consideration and implemented effectively immediately, the toxic competition would reduce and fairer competition shall prevail. Children need to be taught to enjoy the game, children need to be taught that they cannot win all the time, because if a person is winning all the time at every game, somebody else is constantly losing and how is that fair play at all? Certain moral science concepts need to be addressed and followed by parents themselves for the kid to learn, accept and put in practice in life as adults themselves. The moral science holds much more importance to medical students because as doctors they will be directly working with patients hands on, and therefore they need to be utmost careful and clear in what they are learning and doing because other people's lives are at stake. Lastly, healthcare is not a business, education is not a business, and minimum basic income is a human right. Any of the indicators on Human Development Index cannot and should not be commercialized and commodified.

Recommendations for Further Research

I highly appreciate Russia, Ukraine and other former USSR bloc countries for providing opportunities for foreign medical students to study in their State Universities. Now that every stakeholder knows that the market is available and booming with demand, I suggest both the Indian Governments and Russian Governments to implement measures that would ease prospective students' transition moving into their universities. Instead of thinking of Russia as a second option to pursue MBBS, if a student is encouraged to learn the local language and culture on the side from as early as high school, it would ease the pressure on the student and they will also have time to think, digest and understand the uncertainties they might face once they have arrived at their universities. Students should be given training just as they are given NEET training for more easily adapting to their future university in Russia and Ukraine. This way, the intensity of the competition in NEET exam will also reduce and the students will have better clarity on their futures. It is going to be a massive stress buster to know in advance that if they focus on understanding the concepts in biological sciences to the best of their abilities and learn a bit about the Russian culture and language, this experience won't be as stressful and uncertain to both the parents and the students

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