

Students' Experiences Working in a Pharmacy During COVID-19 Lockdown

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Introduction

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacies have been under increased pressure in adapting to the changes, to minimise the impact of the outbreak. Pharmacy students, have been asked to work in a pharmacy by the HEE (HEE, 2020) and HoS.

A literature review concluded that pharmacy students' experiences of working during lockdown has been overlooked, hence, this research been conducted.

Aim: To analyse the response of pharmacy students to the request of working in a pharmacy during COVID-19, and their experiences in doing so.

Objectives:

1. To identify reasons for either choosing to work in a pharmacy or choosing not to during lockdown
2. To investigate time spent working and roles undertaken in pharmacy during lockdown
3. To identify any advantages and disadvantages associated with choosing to work in a pharmacy during lockdown

Methods

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main study.

A Google Form survey was shared to the latter three stages of MPharm Keele University students, regarding whether they had obtained paid employment in a pharmacy during lockdown. If so, their experiences, including advantages and disadvantages of working were established (figure 1). The demographic variables were collected (age, gender and ethnicity).

The survey consisted of tick-boxes, Likert scale, open-style and multiple-choice questions. The findings were then analysed using descriptive analysis and inferential statistics.

The data was entered in Excel then analysed using SPSS. Statistical analysis included Kruskal-Wallis and Chi-squared tests.

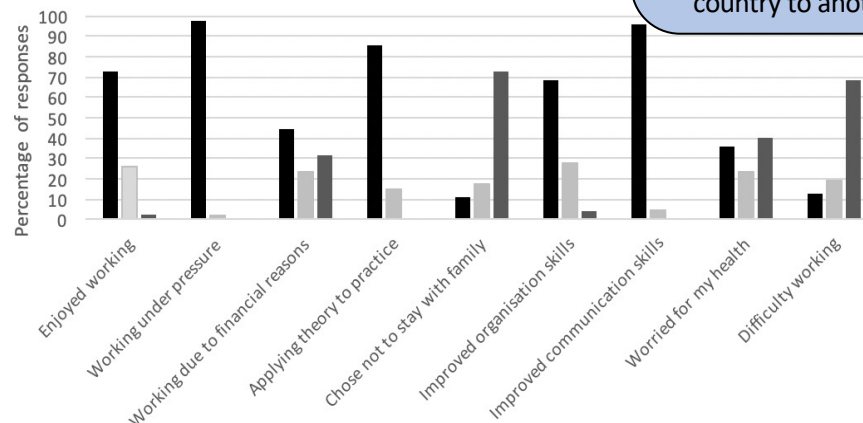
Results

The survey was distributed to 352 students; 106 responses were collected, providing 30.1% response rate.

Fifty-nine of these students did not undertake paid employment in a pharmacy during lockdown, compared to 44.3% who did.

The decision to work was primarily based on gaining experience and giving back to the community. Whereas, one of the reasons why students decided not to work in a pharmacy was due to the difficulty of finding a job.

Figure 1: Responses regarding advantages and disadvantages of working during lockdown



Discussion

Although most students experienced more pressure whilst working in a pharmacy, students reported that they had developed their professionalism during this crisis. This suggests that regardless of the circumstances, students continued to follow standards set out by the GPhC.

The decision to not work was mostly based on the difficulty of finding a job. The lack of advertisements could be a reason as to why students experienced difficulty in obtaining employment. A national request for help, could have guided students towards those pharmacies that required their assistance.

Strengths:

1. Responses were obtained from all three different MPharm stages
2. Responses were from students located all over the UK hence, generalisations can be made

Limitations:

1. The survey did not make it clear which lockdown period it was referring to
2. A low response rate of 30.1% was obtained due to time limitations
3. Although applicable within the UK, the applicability may vary from one country to another

Conclusion

Only 44% of students in this study worked during lockdown, and this was mainly due to the difficulty of finding employment. The importance of job advertisement was therefore, highlighted. Whereas, students who did work during lockdown benefited overall from this experience, gaining new skills and developing current skills.

References

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