

# Exploring Student Perspectives on Ayurvedic Education, its Influences and Challenges: A Descriptive Cross-sectional Study

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Ayurveda emphasizes holistic health through natural remedies and lifestyle modifications, while Allopathy focuses on evidence-based, symptom-targeted care. Integrating these systems can enhance healthcare by combining holistic and scientific approaches. This study explores the perceptions of UG and PG Ayurveda students regarding Ayurveda and Allopathy, highlighting their beliefs, preferences, and readiness to support integrative healthcare practices.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 132 under graduate and post graduate Ayurveda students using a structured questionnaire. The survey captured data on demographic details, teaching preferences, motivations, challenges, and perspectives on curriculum reforms. Descriptive analysis was employed to understand the distribution of preferences for teaching methods, postgraduate choices, and the need for syllabus changes.

**Results:** The study included 132 participants, of which 89 (67%) were undergraduates (UG) and 43 (33%) were postgraduates (PG). Only 5% of students had a family background in Ayurveda, while 81% actively created awareness about it. A preference for clinical postgraduate programs (97%) was observed, with 56% emphasizing practical curriculum improvements and 78% favoring blended teaching approaches. Challenges included insufficient mentorship (16%), theoretical complexity, and language barriers in Sanskrit. Students' key motivations were difficulty securing MBBS seats (47%) and personal interest (23%).

**Conclusion:** The study underscores the importance of modernizing Ayurveda education by enhancing practical training, integrating modern medical principles, and addressing mentorship gaps and language barriers.

**Keywords:** Ayurveda education, Curriculum reform, Blended teaching, Student perspectives

*Journal of Research in Medical and Interpathy Sciences. 2(2);2024*

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, one of the oldest medical systems in the world, emphasizes a holistic approach to health, focusing on the prevention and treatment of diseases through natural remedies, lifestyle modifications, and personalized care. In contrast, Allopathy, or modern medicine, is grounded in evidence-based practices, scientific advancements, and a reductionist approach that focuses on the rapid alleviation of symptoms and precise diagnostics. Both systems have distinct strengths and limitations, and their integration could potentially provide a more comprehensive approach to healthcare.<sup>1,2</sup>

Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) Ayurveda Students, as future practitioners of Ayurveda, play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between these two systems. Their perceptions about Ayurveda and Allopathy reflect their understanding, preferences, and readiness to contribute to an integrative healthcare model. Exploring these perceptions can provide valuable insights into their educational experiences, career aspirations, and potential challenges in adopting or advocating for integrative approaches.<sup>3,4</sup>

Several studies have examined the potential and challenges of integrating Ayurveda with Allopathy. Issues such as lack of standardization, limited scientific validation of traditional remedies, and resistance from practitioners of both systems have

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**Conflict of Interest:** None

**Source of Funding:** None

**How to cite:** Powar JD, Gunjal AH. Exploring Student Perspectives on Ayurvedic Education, its Influences and Challenges: A Descriptive Cross-sectional Study. *Journal of Research in Medical and Interpathy Sciences. 2024;2(2):50–53*

been highlighted as barriers.<sup>5,6</sup> On the other hand, successful integration can enhance chronic disease management, improve patient outcomes, and expand the scope of holistic care.<sup>7,8</sup> This study aims to explore the perceptions of UG and PG students on Ayurveda and Allopathy, focusing on their beliefs, preferences, and readiness to integrate these systems.

## METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional study aimed to explore the perceptions of undergraduate and postgraduate Ayurveda students

regarding modern medicine and Ayurveda. The study was conducted at Ayurveda college in Northern Maharashtra as targeting students enrolled in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. A convenience sampling technique was employed and informed consent was obtained from all participants before enrollment. A pre-tested, structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool, which included sections on demographic details, knowledge and beliefs about Ayurveda and modern medicine, and preferences for integrative practices. The data collection process involved both in-person and online methods to maximize participation. A *Google Form* was prepared and sent to the students to collect responses, ensuring a wide-reaching approach. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended questions to capture detailed, nuanced opinions on students' perceptions and attitudes.

After data collection, the responses were analyzed using SPSS 26 to generate both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic

information and perceptions, while inferential analyses were applied to examine variations in perceptions based on demographic variables such as program level, gender, and region.

## RESULTS

The study includes a total of 132 participants, 67% are undergraduates (UG), while 33% are postgraduates (PG). In terms of gender, 64% are female and 36% are male. Participants are predominantly urban residents (55%) compared to 45% from rural areas. The occupation of fathers is most commonly service (41%), followed by farming (28%), business/private sector (20%), retired (6%), and others (5%). Monthly family income reveals that 28% belong to the upper class, 22% to the upper middle class, 34% to the middle class, 12% to the lower middle class, and 4% to the lower class. The average age is  $26.14 \pm 2.79$  years for UG students and  $21.93 \pm 1.86$  years for PG students.

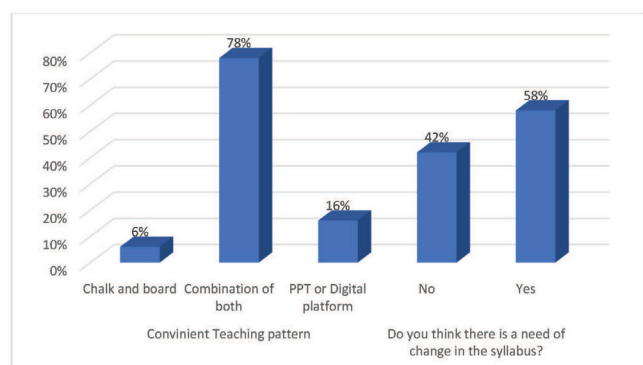
**Table 2:** Student Perspectives on Ayurveda Education: Influences, Awareness, and Preferences.

Questions	Level	n	%
Is there anyone in your family who has a background in or practicing Ayurved?	No	125	95%
	Yes	7	5%
Did you know about Ayurveda when you took admission in it?	No	68	52%
	Yes	64	48%
Are you getting enough guidance to plan your goal?	Digital platform	28	21%
	Educator	30	23%
	Family	26	20%
	Friends/ Senior	27	20%
Do you Create awareness about Ayurveda in your surrounding?	Nil	21	16%
	Maybe	19	15%
	No	6	5%
	Yes	106	81%
Choice for Post-Graduation in Ayurveda	Clinical subjects	127	97%
	Non-clinical subjects	4	3%
Do you think any change is required in current teaching method?	Examination Aspects	30	17%
	Practical Aspects	98	56%
	Theory Aspects	30	17%
What influenced your decision to study Ayurveda?	No Change Needed	16	9%
	Career Opportunities	28	18%
	Family Tradition	7	4%
	Influence of Friends/ Relatives	12	8%
	Difficulty Securing MBBS Seat	75	47%
Personal Interest	37	23%	

**Table 1:** Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Lifestyle Characteristics of the Study Participants.

Variable	Level	n (132)	% (100%)
Ayurved Education level	UG	89	67
	PG	43	33
Gender	Female	84	64
	Male	48	36
Residence	Rural	60	45
	Urban	72	55
Occupation of fathers	Service	54	41
	Farming	37	28
	Business/Private Sector	26	20
	Retired	8	6
	Others	7	5
Residence	Rural	60	45
	Urban	72	55
Diet pattern	Mixed	87	66
	Veg	45	34
Socioeconomic status	Upper class-I	37	28
	Upper Middle Class-II	29	22
	Middle Class-III	45	34
	Lower Middle Class-IV	16	12
	Lower Class	5	4
Age	UG	$21.93 \pm 1.86$	
	PG	$26.14 \pm 2.79$	

The survey provides insights into students' perspectives and experiences regarding Ayurveda education. Most students (95%) do not have a family background in Ayurveda, while 5% have familial ties to the field. Awareness of Ayurveda prior to admission is split, with 52% unaware and 48% aware. Regarding guidance for goal planning, students rely on educators (23%), digital platforms (21%), family (20%), and friends or seniors (20%), with 16% receiving no guidance. A significant majority (81%) actively create awareness about Ayurveda, while 15% are unsure, and 5% do not engage. For post-graduation, clinical subjects are overwhelmingly preferred (97%), with only 3% opting for non-clinical subjects. Regarding teaching methodologies, 56% of students emphasize the need for practical improvements, 17% suggest changes in both theoretical and examination aspects, and 9% see no need for change. The key factors influencing their decision to study Ayurveda include difficulty securing an MBBS seat (47%), personal interest (23%), career opportunities (18%), influence of friends/relatives (8%), and family tradition (4%).



**Figure 1:** Student Perceptions of Teaching Methods and Curriculum Relevance.

This bar graph presents the results of a survey on teaching preferences and syllabus changes. The first bar shows that only 6% of respondents prefer the traditional chalk and board method. The majority (78%) prefer a combination of both traditional and modern methods, such as using PowerPoint or digital platforms. The results show that 42% of respondents do not feel a syllabus change is necessary, while 58% believe a change is required.

Students in Ayurveda education have emphasized the need for a more practical, clinically oriented approach, advocating for increased hospital postings, the integration of modern medical knowledge with Ayurvedic principles, and the adoption of case-based learning. They recommend revising the curriculum to eliminate outdated concepts, introduce hands-on training in traditional techniques like Nadi Vidya and Agnikarma, and foster research opportunities. Additionally, students face challenges in subjects like Kayachikitsa, Shalya Tantra, Sanskrit, and Dravyaguna, primarily due to the practical demands of clinical subjects,

the complexity of theoretical topics, and the language barrier with Sanskrit. To address these issues, they suggest enhancing practical training, providing support for Sanskrit and research skills, and simplifying the teaching methods for theoretical subjects. These changes aim to improve the relevance, effectiveness, and global acceptance of Ayurveda.

## DISCUSSION

The study on 132 participants revealed critical insights into Ayurveda education. Among the participants, 67% were undergraduates (UG) and 33% were postgraduates (PG), with an average age of  $26.14 \pm 2.79$  years for UG students and  $21.93 \pm 1.86$  years for PG students. Females constituted 64% of the cohort, while urban residents accounted for 55%, compared to 45% from rural areas. Only 5% of students had a family background in Ayurveda, yet 81% actively created awareness about it in their surroundings. Furthermore, 52% of participants were unaware of Ayurveda before admission, reflecting limited prior exposure. A significant gap in mentorship was evident, as 16% lacked guidance in planning their goals. This is consistent with a previous study, which found that 20% of healthcare students reported insufficient mentorship.<sup>12</sup>

The preference for clinical postgraduate programs was overwhelmingly high, with 97% of students favoring clinical subjects and only 3% choosing non-clinical ones. Similarly, 56% emphasized improving the curriculum's practical aspects, 17% suggested changes in theoretical and examination components, and 9% felt no changes were necessary. A comparable study reported a 94% preference for clinical programs among health science students.<sup>13</sup> Blended teaching methods, combining traditional and digital tools, were preferred by 78% of students, whereas only 6% supported the traditional chalk-and-board approach. Regarding curriculum reforms, 58% believed a syllabus change was necessary to align with modern healthcare needs. Suggestions included incorporating practical training in techniques like Nadi Vidya and Agnikarma. These findings parallel earlier research, where 75% of students preferred hybrid teaching models for improved engagement and learning.<sup>14</sup>

The decision to pursue Ayurveda was influenced by difficulty securing an MBBS seat (47%), personal interest (23%), career opportunities (18%), influence from friends/relatives (8%), and family tradition (4%). These motivations mirror patterns reported in previous studies, where 45% of students cited limited options for pursuing MBBS and personal interest as significant factors. The findings emphasize the need to modernize Ayurveda education. Recommendations include integrating modern medical principles, fostering interdisciplinary research, and addressing challenges such as complex theoretical subjects and language barriers in Sanskrit. These efforts align with global strategies advocating the integration of traditional medicine into national healthcare systems.<sup>15</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights critical insights into Ayurveda education, revealing significant preferences, challenges, and areas for improvement. A majority of students prefer clinical postgraduate programs (97%) and blended teaching methods (78%), while advocating for curriculum reforms emphasizing practical aspects (56%) and integration of modern medical knowledge. Key motivations for choosing Ayurveda include difficulty securing MBBS seats (47%) and personal interest (23%), though only 5% of students have a family background in the field. Challenges such as insufficient mentorship (16%), complexity in theoretical subjects, and language barriers in Sanskrit underscore the need for enhanced guidance, simplified teaching methods, and interdisciplinary research opportunities. These findings align with global recommendations to modernize traditional medicine education, ensuring its relevance, clinical competence, and wider acceptance in contemporary healthcare systems.

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