

Why not Ortho? Medical Students' Perceptions of Trauma and Orthopaedics as a Career Specialty and the Associated Barriers

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Background

- 2022 women made up 58% UK medical students (1)
- T&O is the largest surgical speciality with lowest female representation- 7% consultants/ SAS (2,3,4)
- T&O must be accessible and appealing to all trainees
- Study exploring attitudes to T&O and the role of gender in career choices
- Secondary aim: compare perceptions between medical students and postgraduate doctors

Aims

- Explore current attitudes towards perusing a career in T&O
- Compare perceived barriers between first year medical students and doctors
- Identify gender disparities between perceptions

Methods

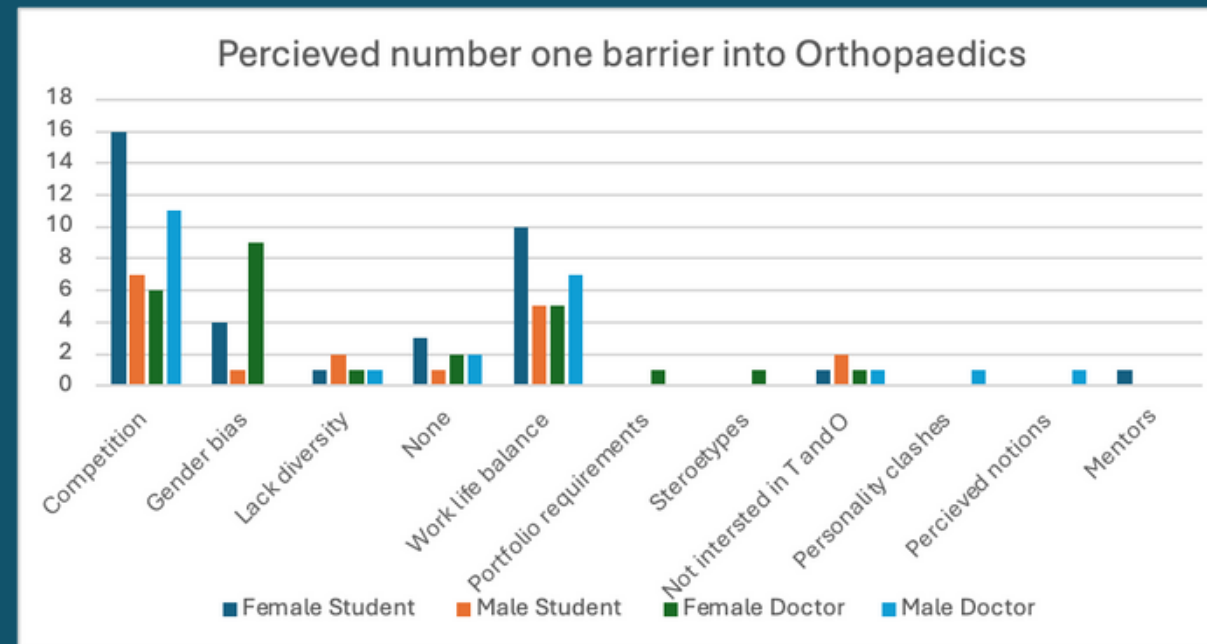
Survey made and distributed via Microsoft Forms to 120 first year students and doctors

Data collected included- baseline demographics, career interests, influencing factors and perceived barriers to pursuing a career in T&O

Data analysis- Quantitative data analysed in Microsoft Excel and chiz statistical test. Free-text responses were visualised using word clouds

Results

- Survey collected 104 responses; 54 medical students and 50 post graduate doctors. Overall 60% (n=62) female and 40% male (n=42).



- When reviewing free text responses, related to T&O perceptions- 71% of the comments carried a negative connotation. Of the negative comments, 65% specifically to issues of gender bias and diversity within the profession
 - “Boys club” “Ortho bros” “Gym bros” “Male dominant” “Issues are cultural”

- Competition ratio identified as a key concern highlighted by 43% of medical students and 34% of doctors.
- Work-life balance regarded as the most important factor influencing career choice, selected by 50% of students and 48% of doctors
- Other perceived barriers:
 - Gender bias perceived by 34% of respondents, with 82% of those identifying as female
 - Lack of diversity reported as a concern by 36% of respondents, 56% of whom identified as male.

Discussion

- Gender bias and lack of diversity were commonly cited barriers to pursuing T&O, with 15% of students identifying it as a primary barrier and 44% as an additional concern
- Among postgraduate doctors, 18% identified gender bias - all of whom were female
- Both students (50%) and doctors (48%) rated work-life balance as the most important factor in career choice

Conclusion

- Perceptions of gender bias and lack of diversity exist early in medical training
- Consider how these concerns can be addressed may be key to improving diversity in T&O
- These findings align with existing literature, highlighting the need for targeted mentorship and earlier exposure to T&O in medical education

