



Assessment of Awareness and Attitude Towards Organ Donation Among Medical, Para-Medical and Non-Medical Students of Puducherry – A Cross-Sectional Study

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT:

Background: India faces a significant shortage in organ donation, with a transplantation rate of 0.65 per million population. Puducherry reported zero donations in 2023 emphasizing the need to assess public and student awareness.

Aim of the Study: To assess and compare awareness and attitudes towards organ donation among medical, para-medical, and non-medical students in Puducherry.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 450 students (150 each from medical, para-medical, and non-medical streams) from October to December 2023. A pre-tested, self-administered questionnaire assessed awareness, attitude, and factors influencing organ donation. Chi-square tests were used to compare groups with $p < 0.05$ considered significant.

Results: Medical students showed the highest awareness (78.7%) and positive attitude (64%), followed by para-medical students (61.3% awareness, 58% attitude) and non-medical students (49.3% awareness, 35.3% attitude). There was significant difference in awareness and attitude among these groups ($p < 0.001$). Social media (47%) was the main information source and key promoters included awareness regarding organ donation while lack of information as major barrier for organ donation.

Conclusion: The study highlights that targeted educational campaigns especially among non-medical students are essential to address misconceptions and promote organ donation awareness.

INTRODUCTION

The act of removing a person's organs after death to transplant them into another person is known as organ donation¹. In India, organ donation may be classified into two categories namely, deceased organ donation which involves taking organs from those who have been deemed brain-stem dead, and live donation which involves taking organs from healthy living donors, usually family.²

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), over a million individuals worldwide require organ

transplants each year, but only about 10% of this demand is satisfied.³ Spain leads the world with 48.9 donors per million population followed by Italy with 28.2 million donors per million population as of 2023.⁴ In contrast, India faces a substantial shortfall, with organ donation rates significantly lower than these leading countries. India has a lower transplantation rate of 0.65 per million population.⁵ This lower rate of transplantation may be primarily due to a lack of awareness, cultural barriers, and regulatory challenges. Pondicherry being the Union Territory consists of four regions namely Puducherry,



Mahe, Yanam, and Karaikal. The organ donation rate in Pondicherry showed “zero” as of 2023.⁶

Organ donation rates are still low despite the Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) of 1994's attempts to expedite the transplantation and donation processes. Organ distribution and national registry management are handled by organizations like the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), while fair regional distribution and public awareness-raising are handled by State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO) and Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (ROTTO).⁷

The Organ donation day in India is celebrated on the 3rd of August every year in commemoration of the first successful deceased organ transplant in 1994. The "Angdaan Jan Jagrukta Abhiyan" mass awareness campaign on organ donation was launched by the Indian government in June 2024 with the primary goal of bridging the gap between organ donors and recipients of transplants.⁸

The purpose of this study is to evaluate Puducherry's medical, paramedical, and non-medical students' knowledge of and attitudes about organ donation. It is important to comprehend these beliefs since non-medical students' opinions mirror public conceptions, while medical and paramedical students have the power to greatly affect organ donation programs. This research is unusual since no other studies in Puducherry have compared these groups. This study fills a significant research gap in a limited area, reflecting larger national issues related to India's low organ donation rates. The aim of the study is to assess the level of awareness and attitude towards organ donation among medical, paramedical and non-medical students of Puducherry and also to compare the level of awareness and attitude towards organ donation between medical, para-medical and non-medical students of Puducherry.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study aimed at assessing the awareness and attitude towards organ donation among medical, para-medical, and non-medical students in Puducherry. The study population comprises medical (MBBS), paramedical (nursing), and non-medical (engineering) students studying in various institutions across Puducherry. The study was conducted from October to December 2023.

The total sample size is 450 students, with 150 participants from each group (medical, para-medical, and non-medical students). The sample size was calculated using a similar study by Chandrasekaran S *et al.* (2023)⁹, considering an expected proportion of adequate

awareness among medical students of 0.69 with a 20% difference. A 5% level of significance and 90% power and was calculated using the formula,

$$P = \frac{P_1 + rP_2}{1 + r}$$

$$n \geq \frac{\left[Z_{1-\frac{\alpha}{2}}\sqrt{(r+1)p(1-p)} + Z_{1-\beta}\sqrt{rp_1(1-p_1) + P_2(1-P_2)} \right]^2}{r(P_2 - P_1)^2}$$

Systematic random sampling was employed to select participants from the three groups (medical, para-medical, and non-medical). For the selection of the nursing students, the sampling interval was calculated as 3 (ie 400/150). Among the medical students the sampling interval was calculated as 4 (i.e 600/150). Similarly, for the selection of non-medical students the sampling interval was calculated to be 6 (i.e 950/150). Based on the calculated sampling interval the students were selected from the attendance register. The study included students from medical, para-medical, and non-medical colleges in Puducherry who consented to participate and students who were absent during data collection or who did not provide consent were excluded from the study.

Data collection

A pre-designed and pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data consisting of four sections. The first section gathered socio-demographic details, including age, gender, profession, and religion. The second section assessed knowledge of organ donation through 14 questions with scores categorized as "good" (scores 8 to 14) and "poor" (scores 1 to 7). The third section evaluated attitudes towards organ donation using 7 questions with responses categorized as "positive" (scores 4 to 7) and "negative" (scores 1 to 3). The final section explored the promoters and barriers related to organ donation aiming to identify motivating factors and perceived challenges among the participants which were given as open ended questions. After providing a detailed explanation of the study in the participants' local language and obtaining informed consent, the questionnaire was distributed for completion.

Statistical Analysis

Data will be entered into MS Excel and analyzed using SPSS version 29. Frequency and percentage were calculated to summarize the socio-demographic data and the awareness and attitude levels. Chi-square was used to compare knowledge and attitude levels across the three



groups (medical, para-medical, and non-medical students). A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 450 students including medical, para-medical, and non-medical students (150 from each) from Puducherry.

RESULTS

Table 1: Frequency distribution of study population based on socio-demographic profile (n=450)

| Variable | Medical students (n=150) n (%) | Para-medical students (n=150) n (%) | Non-medical students (n=150) n (%) |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Age (years) | | | |
| 18-20 | 129 (86) | 133 (88.6) | 126 (84) |
| 21-23 | 21 (14) | 17 (11.4) | 24 (16) |
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 87 (58) | 73 (48.7) | 85 (56.7) |
| Female | 63 (42) | 77 (51.3) | 65 (43.3) |
| Religion | | | |
| Hindu | 100 (66.7) | 90 (60) | 95 (63.4) |
| Christian | 35 (23.3) | 40 (26.7) | 35 (23.3) |
| Muslim | 15 (10) | 20 (13.3) | 20 (13.3) |

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of study population based on socio-demographic profile. The present study revealed that the majority of the study participants across all three groups were between 18–20 years of age. Among them, males were more in the medical and non-medical groups while females were the majority in the para-medical group. Most students across all groups belonged to the Hindu religion.

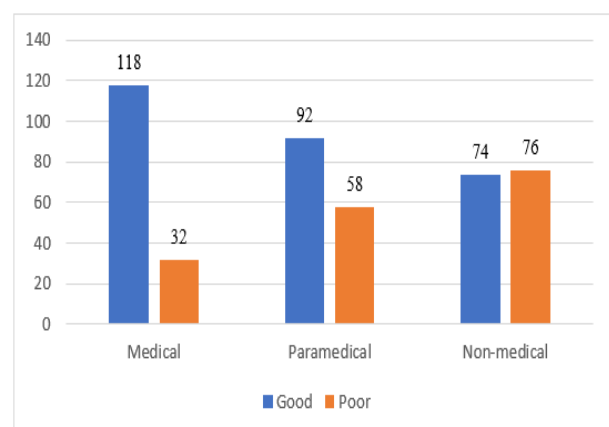


Figure 1: Frequency distribution of awareness on organ donation (n=450)

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of awareness of organ donation. Medical students showed the highest awareness regarding organ donation with 118 (78.7%) while 32 (21.3%) had poor awareness followed by para-medical students in whom 92 (61.3%) demonstrated good awareness, whereas 58 (38.7%) had poor awareness and non-medical students had the lowest awareness, with 74 (49.3%) exhibiting good awareness and 76 (50.7%) showing poor awareness.

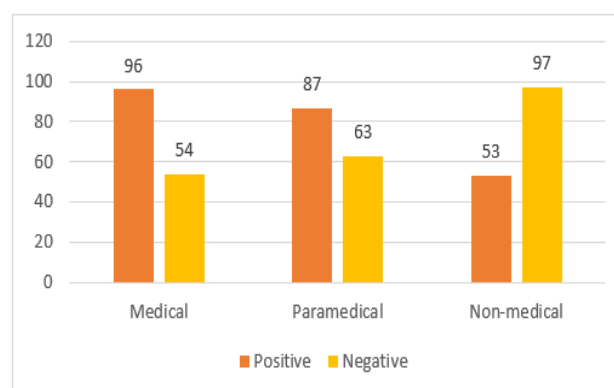


Figure 2: Frequency distribution of attitude towards organ donation (n=450)



Figure 2 shows the frequency distribution of attitudes toward organ donation (n=450). Medical students again displayed the most positive attitude with 96 (64%) having a positive attitude and 54 (36%) showing a negative attitude. Among para-medical students, 87 (58%) had a positive attitude, and 63 (42%) showed a negative attitude. The non-medical students had the most negative attitude towards organ donation, with 53 (35.3%) having a positive attitude and 97 (64.7%) showing a negative attitude.

Table 2: Comparison of level of awareness on organ donation among medical, para-medical and non-medical students (n=450)

| Profession | Good | Poor | X ² | p-value |
|--------------|-------------|------------|----------------|---------|
| Medical | 118 (78.7%) | 32 (21.3%) | 28.025 | <0.001 |
| Para-medical | 92 (61.3%) | 58 (38.7%) | | |
| Non-medical | 74 (49.3%) | 76 (50.7%) | | |

Table 2 shows the comparison of the level of awareness of organ donation among medical, para-medical and non-medical students (n=450). There was a significant difference based on levels of awareness on organ donation between medical, para-medical and non-medical (p-value < 0.001).

Table 3: Comparison of the level of attitude towards organ donation among medical, para-medical, and non-medical students (n=450)

| Profession | Positive | Negative | X ² | p-value |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|---------|
| Medical | 96 (64%) | 54 (36%) | 27.497 | <0.001 |
| Para-medical | 87 (58%) | 63 (42%) | | |
| Non-medical | 53(35.3%) | 97(64.7%) | | |

Table 3 shows the comparison of the level of attitudes towards organ donation among medical, para-medical and non-medical students (n=450). The difference in attitudes across these groups was also statistically significant, with p-value of < 0.001.

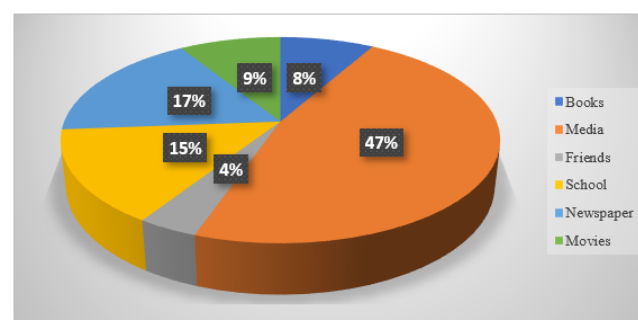


Figure 3: Source of knowledge regarding organ donation among the students.

Figure 3 shows the sources of knowledge regarding organ donation among the students. The primary source of knowledge regarding organ donation was social media accounting for 47% followed by movies (17%), friends (15%), school (9%), books (8%), and newspapers (4%).

Table 4: Frequency distribution of promoters and barriers of organ donation (Multiple responses)

| Promotors of organ donation | Frequency (n) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Awareness on organ donation | 126 |
| Emergency situations | 90 |
| Acceptance and willingness | 88 |
| Education level | 82 |
| Empathy | 44 |
| Legal rules | 43 |
| Barriers of organ donation | Frequency (n) |
| Lack of information | 152 |
| Religious and cultural misconceptions | 112 |
| Blood group mismatch | 102 |
| Organ shortage | 98 |
| Stigma around organ donation | 67 |

Table 4 shows the frequency distribution of promoters and barriers of organ donation (multiple responses). Around 126 study participants reported awareness on organ donation as a major promotor followed by



emergency situations (90), acceptance and willingness (88), education level (82), empathy (44) and legal rules (43).

152 study participants reported lack of awareness to organ donation as the important barrier for organ donation followed by religious and cultural misconceptions reported by 112 participants and blood group mismatch by 102 participants. Organ shortage (98) and stigma and around organ donation (67) were reported to be least contributors for barriers for organ donation.

DISCUSSION

This cross-sectional study sought to assess the awareness and attitudes towards organ donation among medical, paramedical, and non-medical students in Puducherry. The findings reveal significant differences between these groups in both awareness and attitudes, highlighting key insights relevant to improving organ donation rates in India.

This study involved 450 participants, evenly divided into three groups, 150 medical, 150 para-medical, and 150 non-medical students. Among the medical students 92.6% were aged 18-20 years and males were the majority in this group, comprising 87%. A mixed-method study done by Shrivastav V *et al.* among medical students in 2023 showed that the majority were aged 18-20 years (56%) in which the values were found to be lower than the present study and it also showed an equal distribution of males (48%) and females (52%).¹⁰ A study done by Vinay G *et al.* among medical students in India showed that females (72.66%) were more than the males.¹¹

In the para-medical group, the majority 133 students were between 18-20 years old. Unlike the medical group, females dominated here, making up 77% of the participants. A study done by Amin *et al.* among nursing in Kashmir also had female (70%) proportion more than the male (30%) which was concurrent with this study and the majority were between the age group of 21-23 years (62.9%) which was not in line according to the current study results.¹²

Of the non-medical students, 126 were in the 18-20 age group and males were found to be more. A study done by Naidoo *et al.* in Manipal showed that females were found to be more when compared to that of males (19%) among non-medical students.¹³

Across all groups, most participants identified as Hindu, followed by Christians and Muslims.

The study conducted by Amin *et al.* in Kashmir among para-medical students showed that all the participants were Muslims (100%).¹²

These variations across studies in terms of age, gender, and religion can be due to demographic differences by region, cultural influences on career choice. Additionally, social norms may influence gender representation in different fields, and religious demographics can vary significantly by study location, as seen in the higher representation of Muslims in Kashmir.

The current study reveals that medical students had the highest awareness of organ donation, with 78.7% demonstrating good knowledge. A study done by Naidoo *et al.* at Manipal in 2023 showed that 72% of medical students were aware of organ donation which was concurrent with this study findings.¹³ A study done by Dibaba F.K *et al.* in 2019 at Ethiopia among medical students showed that 96.9% of the students had awareness about organ donation which is found to be higher than this study's findings.¹⁴ And a study by Alwahaibi N *et al.* in Oman, where 53.3% of medical students lacked adequate knowledge.¹⁵ These disparities may be attributed to differences in cultural backgrounds and emphasize the need for continuous educational initiatives to promote organ donation awareness among medical students in various regions.

Among para-medical students, 61.3% exhibited good awareness, closely aligning with a study by Chandrasekaran S *et al.* in India in 2022 showed that – 62.5% had adequate knowledge which found a similar result.¹⁶ A study done by Amin *et al.* in Kashmir, where 6% of students had good knowledge¹² and a study done by Alwahaibi N *et al.* at Oman in 2022 showed around 45.7% of para-medical students had good knowledge.¹⁵ These findings were found to be lower than the current study. These lower findings in other regions may reflect varying emphasis on organ donation in para-medical education curricula, suggesting a need for increased focus on this topic.

In contrast, non-medical students in the present study had the lowest awareness with 49.3% of students demonstrating good knowledge. This was similar to a study done by Alwahaibi N *et al.* in Oman in 2022 which showed only 28.4% of non-medical students showed good knowledge.¹⁵ However, a study by Puri S in Himachal Pradesh reported higher awareness levels, with 67.5% of non-medical students having knowledge about organ donation.¹⁷

Hence in this study, on comparison medical students exhibited more level of awareness than the para-medical and the non-medical students. This result was in line with the study done by Amaliyar J *et al.* in Gujarat in 2019 in Puducherry which showed the medical students knowledge was more when compared to non-medical students¹⁸ and a study done Vincent BP *et al.* in 2017 in



Puducherry showed the median score of knowledge was found to be more for medical students when compared to that of para-medical students.¹⁹ These findings underscore the impact of specialized medical training on awareness levels and the importance of integrating organ donation education across different academic disciplines.

In this study, medical students again displayed the most positive attitude with 96 (64%). A study done by Dibaba F.K *et al.* at Ethiopia showed 62.8% had a positive attitude among medical students which more likely aligns with the current study¹⁴ and in contrast a mixed method study done by Shrivastav V *et al.* at Jamnagar showed 364 (91%)¹⁰ and a cross-sectional study done by Vinay G *et al.* at Guwahati among medical students showed 87.15 positive attitude which was found to be higher than the current study.¹¹

A study done by Darlington D *et al.* at Kanyakumari in 2017 showed only 30.56% of the medical students had positive attitude towards organ donation which was found to be much lower than the current value.²⁰

In this study, among para-medical students, 87 (58%) had a positive attitude, and 63 (42%) showed a negative attitude. A study done by Amin at Kashmir showed that only 40% para-medical students had positive attitude and 60% had negative attitude which showed a significant difference in results from the current study¹² whereas a study done by Alwahaibi N *et al.* at Oman in 2022 showed around 67.7% of nursing students had high attitude which is found to be more than the current study's result.¹⁵

In the current study, the non-medical students had the most negative attitude towards organ donation comprising around 97 (64.7%). A study done by Alwahaibi N at Oman in 2022 showed 67.6% of non-medical students showed positive attitude which was in contrast with the current study findings.¹⁵

In comparison, the medical students had more attitude than the para-medical and non-medical students in the current study and it was also found to be statistically significant. A study done by Naidoo *et al.* in Manipal in 2023 showed similar results that medical students had more attitude compared to non-medical students for organ donation.¹³

These variations across groups could be attributed to the level of exposure, knowledge, and educational emphasis each group receives regarding healthcare topics, such as organ donation. Medical students often receive more in-depth training and are more likely to encounter scenarios involving organ donation, fostering a greater understanding and positive attitude. Cultural factors, regional awareness initiatives, and educational

differences may also contribute to these variations, underscoring the importance of targeted interventions to improve attitudes, especially among para-medical and non-medical students.

The primary source of knowledge regarding organ donation was social media accounting for 47% followed by movies (17%), friends (15%), school (9%), books (8%), and newspapers (4%). A study done by Alwahaibi N *et al.* in Oman in 2022 showed that 84.13% accounted for social media which is in line with the current study¹⁵ but a study done by Vincent BP *et al.* and Amaliyar J *et al.* showed that television was the major source of awareness regarding organ donation which contrasts with the current study^{18,19} and also a study done by Amin *et al.* among nursing students revealed that the major source of organ donation were formal education (72.9%) followed by books (12.9%) and mass media (14.2%).¹²

These differences in the sources of information likely reflect variations in media consumption patterns, access to technology, and educational systems across regions. With the increasing reach of social media, it has become a dominant platform for health information, especially among younger demographics. Conversely, the role of formal education and traditional media sources, such as television, may vary depending on regional practices and institutional focus on health education. This highlights the potential for social media to be harnessed effectively in awareness campaigns, while also emphasizing the importance of formal education to provide accurate and comprehensive knowledge on organ donation.

The study found that awareness of organ donation was the key promoter for organ donation. According to research by Alwahaibi N *et al.* 76.8% of people save lives, while 43.9% of people aid others.¹⁵ This reinforces the notion that awareness, empathy, and a robust legal system are key components in promoting a culture of organ donation

The present study found that lack of information was the major barrier identified for organ donation followed by religious and cultural misconceptions (112%). The primary challenges to organ donation were identified by Shrivastav V *et al.* was knowledge gaps, religious myths, lack of exposure, and family disapproval.¹⁰ Another study by Alwahaibi N *et al.* revealed that the main obstacles were fear (42.6%) and lack of awareness (58.8%)¹⁵ followed by a study by Amaliyar J *et al.* that found misuse of organs (33.8%), lack of belief (18.5%), family members' disapproval (50.8%), and a desire to avoid the disfigurement involved (38.5%).¹⁸

This study's strength lies in its comparative approach across three diverse groups, offering valuable insight into the specific needs of each. The large sample size of 450



participants adds robustness to the findings. However, its limitations include reliance on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, and the study's confinement to Puducherry, limiting broader generalizability.

Educational programs, particularly for non-medical and para-medical students, should focus on dispelling myths and enhancing understanding. Leveraging social media for awareness campaigns, involving community leaders to address cultural concerns, and strengthening policy frameworks could all contribute to fostering a more supportive environment for organ donation. These measures are essential to bridging the knowledge and attitude gaps identified, ultimately promoting higher organ donation rates. Overall, these findings emphasize that barriers to organ donation are multidimensional, involving informational, cultural, logistical, and familial factors. Addressing these challenges requires targeted educational campaigns, cultural sensitivity, and support from community and religious leaders to build trust and demystify organ donation.

CONCLUSION

This cross-sectional study assessed awareness, attitudes, promoters, and barriers regarding organ donation among medical, para-medical, and non-medical students in Puducherry. The findings reveal significant differences, with medical students demonstrating the highest awareness (78.7%) and positive attitudes (64%) toward organ donation, followed by para-medical students, while non-medical students showed the lowest awareness (49.3%) and most negative attitudes. Social media emerged as the primary source of information, highlighting its potential for organ donation campaigns targeting young audiences. Key promoters of organ donation identified in this study include awareness, emergency experiences, willingness to help others, and empathy, reflecting a strong need to harness these motivators in educational efforts. Conversely, barriers like lack of knowledge, religious and cultural misconceptions, and organ shortages hinder willingness to donate.

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Consent: Informed consent was obtained before the conduct of the study.

Approval from Institutional Ethical Review Board: The study was conducted after obtaining the institutional ethical board permission (IHEC No: AV/IHEC/2023/136)

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