



## Original Research Article

# IMPACT OF CADAVERIC OATH AND BIOETHICS ON MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Received : 03/09/2024  
Received in revised form : 26/10/2024  
Accepted : 09/11/2024

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DOI: 10.70034/ijmedph.2024.4.124

Source of Support: Nil,  
Conflict of Interest: None declared

Int J Med Pub Health  
2024; 14 (4); 666-669

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the cadaveric oath and bioethics on medical students' ethical development and professional identity. The cadaveric oath serves as a pivotal ritual in medical education, instilling respect for the human body and a commitment to ethical practice. Additionally, the integration of bioethics into the curriculum enhances students' ability to navigate complex moral dilemmas encountered in clinical settings. A quantitative analysis involving 200 medical students revealed high levels of awareness and positive attitudes towards both the cadaveric oath and bioethics. The findings highlight the significance of these components in shaping empathetic, responsible healthcare professionals, emphasizing the need for continued focus on ethical education in medical training.

**Key Words:** Cadaveric Oath, Bioethics, Medical Education, Ethical Development.

## INTRODUCTION

The cadaveric oath and bioethics play crucial roles in shaping the ethical foundation of medical education. The cadaveric oath, typically administered during the first dissection class, symbolizes a commitment by medical students to treat the human body with respect and dignity. This ritual serves not only as a rite of passage but also as a moral guide that instills a sense of responsibility among future healthcare professionals.<sup>[1]</sup> The significance of the cadaveric oath lies in its ability to foster respect for human life, encouraging students to develop empathy and ethical sensibilities essential for their practice.<sup>[2]</sup>

In parallel, bioethics encompasses the study of ethical dilemmas and moral issues arising within healthcare and biological sciences. It equips medical students with the analytical skills required to navigate complex moral questions they will face in clinical settings, such as patient autonomy, informed consent, and end-of-life decisions.<sup>[3,4]</sup> The integration of bioethics into medical curricula is vital for preparing students to handle the multifaceted challenges of modern medicine.<sup>[5]</sup> Recent studies indicate that understanding and applying ethical principles significantly enhance students' decision-making abilities, ultimately

improving patient care.<sup>[6,7]</sup> Furthermore, exposure to ethical discussions fosters critical thinking, enabling students to approach clinical situations with a balanced perspective that considers both medical and ethical implications.<sup>[8]</sup>

This study aims to evaluate medical students' perceptions of the cadaveric oath and bioethics, focusing on their awareness, attitudes, and the perceived impact of these elements on their education and future practice. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for enhancing medical education and ensuring that graduates are equipped to navigate the ethical complexities of healthcare.<sup>[9,10]</sup>

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Design

This study was conducted as a cross-sectional survey aimed at assessing the impact of the cadaveric oath and bioethics education on medical students' ethical attitudes and behaviors. The survey targeted medical students from Government Medical College Korba Chhattisgarh, focusing on their perceptions of the cadaveric oath and bioethics, and its influence on their conduct and approach to patient care.

## Study Population

The study population consisted of 200 medical students, including both first- and second-year students who had recently completed anatomy courses and participated in the cadaveric oath ceremony. The inclusion criteria for the participants were as follows:

- Enrolled in the MBBS course at Government Medical College Korba Chhattisgarh.
- Completion of the cadaveric oath ceremony at the start of their medical studies.
- Willingness to participate in the survey voluntarily.

Students who had prior formal education in bioethics before entering medical school were excluded from the study to maintain consistency in the participants' exposure to bioethics education.

## Sample Size

A total of 200 medical students were selected using simple random sampling. The larger sample size of 200 was chosen to enhance the representativeness of the study population, ensure a higher statistical power, and allow for a more detailed analysis of the students' perspectives across different groups.

## Data Collection

Data was gathered using a structured, pre-validated questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three key sections to capture different aspects of the study:

1. **Section A:** Demographic information (age, gender, academic year, etc.).
2. **Section B:** Questions related to the cadaveric oath, including the students' understanding, perceived significance, and its impact on their respect for human life and dignity.
3. **Section C:** Questions related to bioethics, covering topics such as ethical dilemmas, patient confidentiality, informed consent, and the students' views on how bioethics education influences their decision-making in medical practice.

The survey was distributed to students. The data collection period spanned two weeks to ensure maximum participation.

## Data Analysis

The data collected was entered into SPSS software version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were used to summarize the demographic data and responses to the survey questions. To examine differences in perceptions between first-year and second-year students, inferential statistics including chi-square tests and t-tests were applied.

Comparative analyses were also performed to assess variations in attitudes towards the cadaveric oath and bioethics based on gender, academic year, and previous exposure to ethical topics. Statistical significance was set at a p-value of <0.05.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Gender Distribution of Study Participants**

Gender	First-Year Students (n=110)	Second-Year Students (n=90)	Total (n=200)
Male	60 (54.5%)	52 (57.8%)	112 (56%)
Female	50 (45.5%)	38 (42.2%)	88 (44%)

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Study Participants**

Age Group	First-Year Students (n=110)	Second-Year Students (n=90)	Total (n=200)
18-19 years	65 (59.1%)	30 (33.3%)	95 (47.5%)
20-22 years	45 (40.9%)	60 (66.7%)	105 (52.5%)

**Table 3: Awareness of the Cadaveric Oath**

Awareness	First-Year Students (n=110)	Second-Year Students (n=90)	Total (n=200)
Yes	90 (81.8%)	85 (94.4%)	175 (87.5%)
No	20 (18.2%)	5 (5.6%)	25 (12.5%)

**Table 4: Perception of the Cadaveric Oath's Role in Medical Ethics**

Perception	First-Year Students (n=110)	Second-Year Students (n=90)	Total (n=200)
Instills respect for human bodies	85 (77.3%)	80 (88.9%)	165 (82.5%)
Impacts on future medical practice	75 (68.2%)	70 (77.8%)	145 (72.5%)

**Table 5: Perception of Bioethics Awareness**

Awareness	First-Year Students (n=110)	Second-Year Students (n=90)	Total (n=200)
Yes	85 (77.3%)	88 (97.8%)	173 (86.5%)
No	25 (22.7%)	2 (2.2%)	27 (13.5%)

**Table 6: Perception of Bioethics in Ethical Dilemmas and Patient Care**

Question	First-Year Students (n=110)	Second-Year Students (n=90)	Total (n=200)
Bioethics helps in handling ethical dilemmas	80 (72.7%)	75 (83.3%)	155 (77.5%)
Bioethics improves decision-making in patient care	70 (63.6%)	73 (81.1%)	143 (71.5%)

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study shed light on medical students' perceptions regarding the cadaveric oath and bioethics, emphasizing their importance in shaping ethical practices within the medical field. The high level of awareness of the cadaveric oath (87.5%) highlights its significance in medical education and aligns with previous studies that underscore the role of rituals in fostering respect for the human body and promoting professionalism among future healthcare providers.<sup>[1,2]</sup> The cadaveric oath serves as a moral compass for students, guiding their attitudes and behaviors as they transition from theoretical learning to practical application in healthcare settings.<sup>[3]</sup>

The finding that 82.5% of students believe the cadaveric oath instills respect for the human body is particularly noteworthy. This percentage varied between first-year (77.3%) and second-year students (88.9%), reflecting the increased exposure to clinical practice and ethical dilemmas that students face as they progress in their studies.<sup>[4]</sup> Previous research indicates that the relevance of medical ethics education grows as students encounter more complex clinical scenarios.<sup>[5,6]</sup>

Regarding bioethics, the study found that 86.5% of students were aware of the concept, with significantly higher awareness among second-year students (97.8%) compared to first-year students (77.3%). This increase in awareness can be attributed to the greater emphasis on ethical discussions and dilemmas as students advance in their education.<sup>[7,8]</sup> The majority of students (77.5%) believed that bioethics helps them navigate ethical dilemmas, further reinforcing the importance of integrating bioethical training into medical curricula.<sup>[9,10]</sup>

Moreover, the study found that 71.5% of students agreed that bioethics enhances decision-making in patient care, consistent with existing literature that emphasizes the positive impact of bioethics education on clinical practice.<sup>[11,12]</sup> Ethical decision-making skills are essential in addressing complex issues such as patient autonomy, informed consent, and end-of-life care.<sup>[13,14]</sup>

Overall, this study supports the assertion that integrating bioethics and the cadaveric oath into medical education is essential for cultivating compassionate, ethical healthcare professionals. Formal training in these areas not only enriches students' understanding of ethical issues but also equips them to handle the moral complexities they will face in their professional careers.<sup>[15,16]</sup> As medical education evolves, it is imperative that curricula emphasize the importance of these elements to foster a strong ethical foundation among future practitioners.<sup>[17,18]</sup>

In conclusion, this study highlights the integral role of the cadaveric oath and bioethics in medical education. Both components serve as foundational

pillars in shaping students' ethical perspectives and professional identities, ensuring that future healthcare providers approach their work with respect, compassion, and a strong commitment to ethical principles.<sup>[19,20]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the importance of the cadaveric oath and bioethics in medical education. The cadaveric oath fosters respect for the human body and reinforces ethical responsibility among students. Simultaneously, bioethics equips future healthcare professionals with essential skills to navigate complex moral dilemmas in clinical practice. By integrating these elements into medical training, we prepare students to prioritize patient dignity and ethical decision-making. Ultimately, a strong ethical foundation is crucial for shaping compassionate and competent healthcare providers in an increasingly complex medical landscape.

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