

Pathway to Public Health: Investigating Reasons Behind the University of Sunderland Students Pursuit of Postgraduate Studies

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Abstract

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Background: Postgraduate studies in public health are vital for addressing global healthcare challenges. This study examines the factors motivating students at the University of Sunderland to pursue advanced degrees in public health, aiming to understand both personal and external influences on their educational choices. **Methods:** The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design, utilizing a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The research was conducted at the University of Sunderland's main and London campuses, targeting postgraduate public health students. Purposive sampling was used to select participants, and data were analyzed using SPSS version 28.0, focusing on descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations. **Results:** Out of 102 respondents, 94 met the eligibility criteria. The mean age was 31.5 years, with a majority being female (61.8%) and from the African continent (58.5%). Most respondents (52.1%) had clinical experience, and a significant portion (66%) cited career advancement as their primary motivation. Other notable motivations included improving community health (60.6%) and a desire to work in healthcare policy (44.7%). Cultural background significantly influenced motivations related to global health challenges, while academic history significantly affected motivations concerning community health improvement and disease prevention. **Discussion:** The findings highlight the diverse motivations driving students to pursue postgraduate public health studies, with career advancement being the most significant factor. Cultural and academic backgrounds play crucial roles in shaping these motivations, suggesting the need for tailored support and resources to address the specific needs of diverse student populations. The study underscores the importance of understanding these motivational factors to enhance educational strategies and support services for public health students.

Keywords: Postgraduate education, Career advancement, Higher Education, Public health, Motivations

Introduction

Postgraduate studies represent a deliberate effort to deepen knowledge in a specific field, with public health standing out as crucial in addressing global healthcare challenges. This choice reflects a purposeful decision to enhance expertise and contribute to community well-being (Keim, 2008).

The University of Sunderland is well-known for its dedication to achieving high standards in both education and research (the University of Sunderland, 2023) and has established itself as a prominent institution of higher education located in the vibrant and multicultural heart of a globally dynamic city (Clout, et al., 2023). In its dynamic academic environment, a diverse group of students is on the transformative voyage of pursuing postgraduate studies in public health. However, the motivations and fundamental influences guiding these students toward this path have become a source of curiosity and investigation.

This study, titled "Pathway to Public Health," delves into the intricate factors driving University of Sunderland students to pursue postgraduate studies in public health. It aims to dissect the diverse influences, including personal and external factors, shaping their educational decisions. Public health, a holistic field, blends science and art to prevent diseases and improve well-being through organized societal efforts. It considers factors such as biology, social dynamics, environment, and behaviour (Faculty of Public Health, 2023).

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In the UK, public health degrees aim to improve community health through various strategies. Students at the University of Sunderland can pursue bachelor's, master's (MPH), or advanced degrees (DrPH or Ph.D.) in public health. The curriculum covers epidemiology, healthcare policy, environmental health, and more, equipping students with skills in data analysis and policymaking (University of Sunderland, 2023).

The duration of time needed to complete a public health degree program varies depending on the level of the degree. A bachelor's typically spans three to four years, while a master's program like the MPH typically lasts one year for full-time students. On the other hand, doctoral programs may extend over several years to finish (studyinfocentre.com., 2023). Admission criteria for public health programs differ among universities. Typically, for undergraduate programs, applicants are expected to have completed A-levels or attained equivalent qualifications. Master's programs usually necessitate a relevant bachelor's degree, while doctoral programs often mandate a master's degree in a related discipline. International students may also be required to satisfy English language proficiency criteria.

Individuals who complete public health programs in the UK can embark on careers across diverse sectors, encompassing public and private entities, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions. These career options comprise positions such as epidemiologists, health policy analysts, health educators, and environmental health officers NHS (2017).

Students should opt for programs that have received accreditation from respected bodies such as the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) or other pertinent accrediting organisations (ASPHER, 2023). This accreditation assures that the programs adhere to and fulfil well-defined quality standards, offering students a reputable and high-quality educational experience in public health.

Method

This cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted at the University of Sunderland's main campus and London campus, situated in the United Kingdom. The focus is on the public health postgraduate programs offered by the university. The research tool used in this study was the researcher's structured questionnaire, which consisted of closed-ended questions, allowing participants to choose from predetermined response options. This research adopted the purposive sampling technique, which goal is to gain in-depth insights into specific characteristics or experiences within a targeted group.

Data analysis involved utilizing a coding guide for the responses obtained from the questionnaire. Data entry and analysis were conducted using Statistical Processing for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, specifically version 28.0. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency tables, percentages, and standard deviation means, were employed for the data analysis process.

Results

One hundred and two respondents filled out the Microsoft Forms however eight of them were not currently enrolled on postgraduate study in public health. Data analysis was based on 94 respondents who met the eligibility criteria. The response rate was 92.2%. Above a third (35.1%) of the respondents had enrolled in the University of Sunderland postgraduate public health program. The mean age of the respondents was 31.5 ± 6.5 years and more than half (51%) were within 22-30 years. Most (61.8%) of the respondents were females. The respondents were mostly (58.5%) from the African continent, and more than half (52.1%) of the respondents had clinical experience (See, table 1). Less than a quarter (23.4%) of the respondents had nursing as their previous academic experience.

Driving Forces Compelling Students at the University of Sunderland to Pursue Postgraduate Studies in Public Health

The following topped the respondent's most significant driving force for pursuing a postgraduate study in public health at the University of Sunderland; Career advancement opportunities (66%); interest in improving community health (60.6%) and desire to work in the healthcare policy (44.7%) (See, Table 2).

Respondents' Motivations based on Cultural background, and Academic History

The respondents reported various motivations for pursuing public health at the University of Sunderland and they had varied responses. Those from Africa were motivated mostly based on a desire to work in health policy (61.9%); career advancement (59.7%); influence of current global health challenges (58.1%); passion for disease prevention (55.6%) and interest to improve community health (54.4%). Respondents from Asia were motivated

mostly based on career advancement (32.3%); passion for disease prevention (30.6%); influence of current global health challenges (29%); interest in improving community health (28.4%) and desire to work in healthcare policy (28.6%). Furthermore, respondents from Europe reported that they were motivated based on an interest in improving community health (12.3%), a desire to work in healthcare policy (9.4%) and a passion for disease prevention (8.3%). Respondents from America were mostly motivated by the influence of current global health challenges (6.5%) and interest in improving community health (3.5%). Also, those from Australia were mostly motivated by the influence of current global health challenges (3.2%) and passion for disease prevention (2.8%) (See, Table 3).

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Currently Enrolled on Postgraduate study	94	100
Length of time spent in the postgraduate study		
≤ 3month	32	34
4-6 month	33	35.1
7-9 month	7	7.5
10-12 month	22	23.4
Age (in years) $\bar{x} \pm SD = 31.5 (SD) 6.5$		
22-30	48	51
31-39	37	39.4
40-48	6	6.4
49-57	3	3.2
Gender		
Female	58	61.7
Male	35	37.2
Non-binary	1	1.1
Continent of Origin		
Africa	55	58.5
Asia	27	28.7
Europe	9	9.6
America	2	2.1
Australia	1	1.1
Sector worked before Postgraduate studies		
Clinical	49	52.1
Health Administration	22	23.4
Public Health	13	13.8
Others	10	10.6

In addition, a chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between respondents' cultural background and motivation to pursue postgraduate study in public health based on improving community health ($\chi^2 = 3.8$, $p = 0.87$); desire to work in healthcare policy ($\chi^2 = 4.9$, $p = 0.76$) passion for disease prevention ($\chi^2 = 5.8$, $p = 0.67$) and career advancement ($\chi^2 = 9.9$, $p = 0.27$) showed no significant relationship. However, there was a significant relationship between cultural background and motivation based on the influence of current global health challenges ($\chi^2 = 15.9$, $p = 0.04$) (See table 3).

Table 2: Motivation of the Respondents to Pursue a Postgraduate Study in Public Health

Motivation to consider pursuing a Postgraduate degree in Public Health	Least significant	Fairly significant	Moderately significant	Significant	Most significant
Interest in improving community health	7 (7.4)	4 (4.4)	8 (8.5)	18 (19.1)	57 (60.6)
Desire to work in the healthcare policy	8 (8.5)	6 (6.4)	11 (11.7)	27 (28.7)	42 (44.7)
Passion for disease prevention	4 (4.3)	5 (5.3)	14 (14.9)	35 (37.2)	36 (38.3)
Influence of current global health challenges	4 (4.3)	5 (5.3)	26 (27.7)	28 (29.8)	31 (33)
Career advancement opportunities	5 (5.3)	1 (1.1)	10 (10.6)	16 (17)	62 (66)

Examining the respondents' previous academic experience and their motivation to pursue postgraduate study in public health at the University of Sunderland, the respondents had varied motivations. Respondents who study nursing previously reported that they were motivated mostly by a desire to work in health care policy (35.7%); passion for disease prevention (30.6%); interest in improving community health (29.8%) and influence of current global health challenges. Likewise, respondents who studied pharmacy previously reported that they were mostly motivated by a passion for disease prevention (22.2%); career advancement (19.4%) and an interest in improving community health. Respondents who studied environmental health previously reported that they were mostly motivated by the influence of current global health challenges (13%); career advancement (9.7%) and desire to work in healthcare policy (9.5%). Also, respondents who studied public health previously reported that they were motivated mostly by the influence of current global health challenges (14.8%); interest in improving community health (14%); career advancement (12.9%) and passion for disease prevention (11.1%) (See, table 3).

Table 3 Respondents' Motivations based on Cultural background, and Academic History

Variable	Interest in improving community health			Desire to work in health policy			Passion for disease prevention			Influence of current global health challenges			Career advancement opportunities		
	LS (%)	AS (%)	MS (%)	LS (%)	AS (%)	MS (%)	LS (%)	AS (%)	MS (%)	LS (%)	AS (%)	MS (%)	LS (%)	AS (%)	MS (%)
Continent of Origin															
Africa	7(63.6)	17(65.4)	31(54.4)	9(64.3)	20(52.6)	26(61.9)	8(88.9)	27(55.1)	20(55.6)	9(100)	28(51.9)	18(58.1)	5(83.3)	13(50.0)	37(59.7)
Asia	3(27.3)	8(30.8)	16(28.1)	4(28.6)	11(28.9)	12(28.6)	1(11.1)	15(30.6)	11(30.6)	-	18(33.3)	9(29.0)	1(16.7)	6(23.1)	20(32.3)
Europe	1(9.1)	1(3.8)	7(12.3)	1(7.1)	4(10.5)	4(9.4)	-	6(12.2)	3(8.3)	-	8(14.8)	1(3.2)	-	6(23.1)	3(4.8)
America	-	1(3.8)	2(3.5)	-	2(5.3)	-	-	1(2.0)	1(2.8)	-	-	2(6.5)	-	1(3.8)	1(1.6)
Australia	-	-	1(1.8)	-	1(2.6)	-	-	-	1(2.8)	-	-	1(3.2)	-	-	1(1.6)
χ^2	3.8			4.9			5.8			15.9			9.9		
p-value	0.87			0.76			0.67			0.04			0.27		
Academic history															
Nursing	-	5(19.2)	17(29.8)	-	7(18.4)	15(35.7)	-	11(22.4)	11(30.6)	-	14(25.9)	8(25.8)	1(16.7)	9(34.6)	12(19.4)
Pharmacy	1(9.1)	3(11.5)	8(14.0)	1(7.1)	6(15.8)	5(11.9)	-	4(8.2)	8(22.2)	-	6(11.1)	6(19.4)	-	3(11.5)	9(14.5)
Medicine	-	7(26.9)	11(19.3)	2(14.3)	10(26.3)	6(14.3)	1(11.1)	12(24.5)	5(13.9)	2(22.2)	10(18.5)	10(18.5)	-	4(15.4)	14(22.6)
Environmental science	4(36.4)	3(11.5)	4(7.0)	4(28.6)	3(7.9)	4(9.5)	2(22.2)	7(14.3)	2(5.6)	2(22.20)	7(13)	7(13)	1(16.7)	4(15.4)	6(9.7)
Public Health	5(45.5)	2(7.7)	8(14)	5(35.7)	6(15.8)	4(9.5)	5(55.6)	6(12.2)	4(11.1)	3(33.30)	8(14.8)	8(14.8)	4(66.7)	3(11.5)	8(12.9)
Others	1(9.1)	6(23.1)	9(15.8)	2(14.3)	6(15.8)	8(19)	1(11.1)	9(18.4)	6(16.7)	2(22.2)	9(16.7)	9(16.7)	0	3(11.5)	14(21)
χ^2	21.9			17.5			21.3			8.5			17.7		
p-value	0.02			0.06			0.02			0.59			0.06		

Similarly, the relationship between the respondent's academic history and their motivation to study public health at the University of Sunderland was assessed using a Chi-square test. The result showed a significant relationship between respondent's academic history and their motivation based on interest in improving community health ($\chi^2= 21.9$, $p=0.02$) and passion for disease prevention ($\chi^2= 21.3$, $p=0.02$). However, there was no significant relationship between academic history and motivation based on a desire to work in healthcare policy ($\chi^2= 17.5$, $p= 0.06$); the influence of current global health challenges ($\chi^2= 8.5$, $p= 0.59$) and career advancement opportunity ($\chi^2= 17.7$, $p=0.06$) (See, table 3)

University of Sunderland Public Health program Aspect that Appeal to the Respondents

Faculty expertise (31.9%), research opportunities (31.9%) and course curriculum topped the respondents' reasons for choosing to study at the University of Sunderland postgraduate public health program. Also, half (50%) of the respondents reported that time management was the most significant challenge they faced as a student. While few (8.5%) of the respondents reported that the course content was most challenging for them

Respondent's Perceived Advantages Linked to Postgraduate Education in Public Health at the University of Sunderland

A majority (75.5%) of respondents believed that the course was organized in such a way that it would increase their career chances. Most (72.3%) of the respondents reported that public health courses have helped them to improve their career prospects. Also, sixty-three per cent of the respondents reported that pursuing a public health course has helped them to improve their employability. Above a quarter (25.5%) of the respondents reported that pursuing a public health course had helped them to secure graduate employability. Less than half (39.4%) of the respondents reported that they had attended a career-focused seminar during their study. Likewise, a majority (77.7%) of the respondents reported that the public health course organized at the university focused on the global context (See, Table 4).

Table 4 Perceived Advantages of Pursuing Postgraduate Education in Public Health at the University of Sunderland

Variable	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Maybe F (%)
The course is organized to increase your chances of a career	71(75.5)	10(10.6)	13(13.8)
A public health course helps you improve your career prospects	68(72.3)	15(16.0)	11(11.7)
Public health course helps you to improve employability	60(63.8)	17(18.1)	17(18.1)
The course helped to secure graduate employability	24(25.5)	55(58.5)	15(16)
Attended career-focused seminar	37(39.4)	50(53.2)	7(7.4)

Improvement of Public Health Course at the University of Sunderland

Interaction with peers (51.1%); research opportunities (26.6%) and course content (13.8%) were the things respondents reported they enjoyed most about taking public health courses at the university. The respondents reported that the following should be included to enhance the employability prospects of graduates; internship opportunities (73.4%); networking events (12.8%) and soft skill training (7.4%). The respondents defined accreditation as; a standardized evaluation process (47.9%); a formal recognition of program quality (39.4%); and a type of certification. Most (68.1%) of the respondents reported that accreditation of the program influenced their choice of the course (See, Table 5).

Discussion

There is a growing recognition of the vital role of postgraduate education in addressing global public health challenges. Understanding why students choose to pursue postgraduate studies in public health is essential for designing relevant and effective educational pathways; this can lead to more relevant and effective educational experiences. This study investigated the underlying factors driving students' choices to pursue postgraduate education in public health at Sunderland University.

More than half of the respondents were within 22-30 years which is the expected age of students pursuing postgraduate study (Mouton et al, 2015). This age category is lower than the age range reported by Hansraj and Rampersad (2022) in South Africa. The age category observed revealed that many young people are pursuing postgraduate studies, which may be because of more interest in public health or because they are still deciding on their career paths, while older respondents may be more established in their professional careers. This finding corroborates the results of Hoffman and Julie (2012) and Sebothoma et al. (2021) in South Africa that young graduates were more likely to pursue postgraduate studies. This study finding revealed that most of the participants had nursing previous academic experience. The previous academic experience observed implies that nurses are increasingly moving from their career path to public health, probably due to their clinical experience of the need to prevent disease rather than treatment. This finding is like the report of Havenga and Sengane (2018) that an increased number of professional nurses enrolled for postgraduate studies in public health.

Table 5 Improvement of Public Health Course at the University of Sunderland

Items	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
One thing Enjoyed most about taking the public health course		
Interaction with peers	48	51.1
Course content	13	13.8
Practical experience	8	8.5
Research opportunities	25	26.6
Enhance employability prospects		
Internship opportunities	69	73.4
Industry-specific certification	6	6.4
Soft skill training	7	7.4
Networking events	12	12.8
Accreditation definition		
Formal recognition of program quality	37	39.4
A type of certification	8	8.5
A standardized process	45	47.9
I do not know	4	4.2
Accreditation influences the decision on the choice of course		
Yes	64	68.1
No	16	17
Maybe	14	14.9

This study finding revealed various factors such as career advancement opportunities; interest in improving community health, desire to work in the healthcare policy, passion for disease prevention and influence of current global health challenges as the driving forces compelling the students at the University of Sunderland to pursue public health courses. The various motivations compelling the participants had varied degrees depending on their cultural background, and academic history. This report was dissimilar from the main motivators for the pursuit of postgraduate programs reported in other health disciplines where the accomplishment of personal goals, and expansion of the knowledge in that field were the major reasons reported (Cobbing et al. 2017 and Sebothoma et al. 2021).

Similarly, this finding is at variance with the results of Gyamera and Asare, (2023) in Ghana where they reported that international student's decision to pursue higher education was because of cultural and social relationships, language, physical proximity, historical legacies, perceptions of study destinations, and challenges related to inadequate physical and educational resources. Similarly, Roga et al. (2015) reported that factors encompass the desire to learn either the Latvian or Russian language, the exploration of unfamiliar territories, adherence to traditions, the presence and quality of specific study programs, international acclaim, credit recognition, availability of scholarships, affordable tuition fees, post-graduation job prospects, the environment, the option to commence studies in the winter semester, familial connections, and the presence of relatives or friends in the chosen country, along with academic quality where the factors compelling international students to pursue postgraduate studies. Fajcikova and Urbancova (2019) reported several factors motivating students to pursue postgraduate studies such as the quality of instructional personnel, the aspiration to enhance social status and cultivate a continuous career path, the drive to develop competencies and seamlessly apply them in practical settings, an emphasis on the quality of the education process concerning future employment prospects, the assessment of the institution's advantages, the pursuit of extended student life by undecided students, and the fulfilment of community expectations.

This study finding revealed that participants who were previously nurses were motivated mostly by a desire to work in health care policy; passion for disease prevention; interest in improving community health and influence of current global health challenges. This finding is at variance with the result of Havenga and Sengane (2018) that most professional nurses who enrolled for postgraduate studies were motivated to increase their chances of employment, salary and progression prospects.

Furthermore, Hu, et al. (2022) reported that in China decision to pursue a postgraduate program has various dimensions such as home countries' push factors, and China's pull factors, including economic growth, potential, bilateral trade relations, and advancements in science, technology, and education. University attractiveness factors,

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spanning reputation, educational quality, campus environment, faculty-student ratio, educational expenditure per student, and universities' GDP per capita. In addition, personal choice factors, reflecting individual subjective norms and personal values, exert influence on students' decisions to study abroad. This difference in motivation to pursue a postgraduate reported in this study and others may be because this study focused on public health programs alone as opposed to other studies that had a broader scope.

This study finding revealed a significant relationship between cultural background and participants' motivation to pursue public health based on the influence of current global health challenges. This implies that the health issue faced by the participants in their home country propelled their choice to study public health to acquire skills and knowledge to solve the problem. This is evident as some were compelled to study public health to improve community health. Also, this study finding revealed a significant relationship between respondent's academic history and their motivation based on interest in improving community health and passion for disease prevention. This is because most of the participants already had clinical experience and were willing to work with the community to improve their health and prevent disease. However, their previous academic history does not influence their motivation to pursue public health based on the need to work in healthcare policy, the influence of current global challenges and career advancement opportunities. This may be because they are already working in the health sector and are used to the system. Also, they have career advancement opportunities in their previous academic experience which is not only available in public health.

The participants reported that a postgraduate study in public health will increase their career chances and prospects, improve their employability and secure employment. This finding is similar to the result of Kate (2013) that students perceived the benefit of pursuing a postgraduate program because of multiple employment chances. Also, Hout (2012) observed that students who completed postgraduate degrees had better chances in the labour market and contributed to improving the community's well-being. Wen and Sha (2014) reported that students enrolled on postgraduate studies because of the employment opportunities. This shows the relationship between the labour market and higher education. If there is a pandemic or epidemic that will result in disease prevention and change in lifestyle of the populace there will be a demand for skilled and specialized labour increase, thus leading to the increase in the enrolment for postgraduate studies in public health. This study finding is at variance with the result of Altbach et al. (2019) that some of the benefits derived from pursuing a postgraduate program are seeking higher salaries.

The challenges reported by the participants in the pursuit of their postgraduate program were time management, research requirements, practical experience, and course content. This finding corroborates the report of Matin et al. (2017) in a study in Bangladesh that time constraints and work overload for the completion of thesis work were major challenges among study participants. The time pressure and workload had the highest scores indicating they were the most challenging factors. This finding may be because some of the students may be employed and are married. Thus, interfering with their study and posing as a challenge. Similarly, Yasmin et al. (2018) reported that postgraduate students faced four categories of challenges such as dispositional, situational, institutional, and academic. The dispositional challenges were cognitive skills, pressure of assignments and presentations on time, low grades in exams, rivalry and grouping and fear of isolation and neglect. The situational challenges were financial, family and time management challenges. The institutional challenges were examination-related problems, resources, IT facilities and Infrastructure. The academic challenges were the instructors' role, poor communication skills and curriculum in the study. This finding is at variance with the result of Barbeiro et al. (2015) that academic writing was one of the major challenges faced by postgraduate students. Havenga and Sengane (2018) reported that postgraduate students faced personal challenges such as financial, employment, family, and accommodation challenges. Likewise, Roets and Maritz (2013) reported that postgraduate students faced limited resources challenges.

The respondents reported that to enhance the employability prospects of Sunderland University graduates there should be internship opportunities, networking events, industry-specific certification, and soft skill training incorporated into the curriculum to give their students an edge over others in the labour market. This is crucial for the university to consider as one of the benefits the participants reported for pursuing a postgraduate program was employability. Also, the participants reported that they enjoyed the interaction they had with their peers, research opportunities, practical experience and course content while taking public health courses at the university. The fact that the school was accredited also influenced the choice of the students to enrol in the school. This is important to as students who are satisfied with the program at the university can recommend the school to others which will help to increase the enrolment of the school.

Conclusion

The participants had various motivations for pursuing postgraduate study such as career advancement opportunities; interest in improving community health, desire to work in the healthcare policy, passion for disease

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prevention and influence of current global health challenges. They also had various benefits they derived from pursuing a postgraduate study in public health such as increased career chances and prospects, improved employability, and secure employment. Also, the participants faced various challenges while pursuing a postgraduate program at Sunderland University such as time management, research requirements, practical experience, and course content.

Based on these findings the following is thereby recommended.

- The school should include more internship programs in the curriculum. This will enable students to have more hands-on experience that will increase their employment prospects.
- The school administration should ensure that the program remains accredited because the accreditation of the program attracts more students to enrol in the school.
- The school administration should create a research opportunity for students where they can easily access grants and skills for conducting research.
- The curriculum of the school should be reviewed in such a way that the students can easily understand the course content.
- The school should organize a seminar for students on how to manage their time and how to cope with the demands of the study.
- The school should maintain a healthy environment where students can freely interact with one another.

Study limitations

The study's focus on a specific university and its public health programs may limit the broader applicability of the results to different academic institutions or disciplines and the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, as participants may provide answers influenced by social expectations or subjective interpretations.

Also, there was notable limitation of this study is the challenge posed by a low response rate during the data collection phase. Despite the meticulous design of the survey and efforts to engage participants, the lower-than-anticipated response rate has affected the findings.

Another limitation of this study lies in the limited availability of articles and comprehensive literature specifically addressing the motivations and experiences of students pursuing postgraduate studies in public health at the University of Sunderland. The scarcity of existing research on this precise subject hinders the ability to contextualize findings within a broader academic framework, limiting comparative analysis and potentially affecting the generalizability of results. While the study contributes original insights, the lack of extensive literature emphasizes the pioneering nature of the investigation and points to opportunities for future research to further explore this unique aspect of postgraduate education.

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