

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Motivation and Perception for Choosing Dentistry as a Career among Students of Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Dentists in today's world play an important role in society as professional health care workers. In developing countries, dentistry as a profession is limited to a small percentage of community and still has to go a long way.

Aim: To determine the motivation and perception of undergraduate and postgraduate dental students among dental colleges in Udaipur city.

Materials and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among all dental students (N = 600). A self-administered questionnaire consisted of demographic information and questions regarding motivation and perception. A total of approximately 600 students were enrolled at the time of study. Further elimination was done to maintain approximately equal representation of students of each year. Thus, a total of 350 students were randomly selected from all years of dental course to keep minimal bias. Chi-square test was used for statistical analysis.

Results: After statistical analysis, the difference was found to be nonsignificant ($p > 0.5$) in three questions while in other questions the difference was significant ($p < 0.5$).

Conclusion: This study concludes that job security, improving esthetics, self-employment, money factor, flexibility in working hours, and professional status are the motivating and perceptible factors. So, it may be a good idea to establish educational programs in dental colleges to educate students on other aspects of dentistry.

Keywords: Dental students, Motivation, Perception.

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INTRODUCTION

Dentistry as a career overweighs the other professions due to its altruistic values and service orientation. However, students have many career options and it is difficult for them to choose the best option out of those that can really satisfy their passion, interest, and income needs.¹

Dentists in today's world play an important role in society as professional health care workers. In developing countries, dentistry as a profession is limited to a small percentage of the community and still has to go a long way.²

Demographically, being the second largest nation, we have nearly 300 dental schools wherein students from different economic and social backgrounds are choosing dentistry as their career.³

In India, dental manpower has steadily increased. All the dental colleges in India have been either aided or run by the government since 1966.⁴

Students enter the field of dentistry through competitive entrance examinations in India. The pressure from parents is also an important factor in choosing dentistry as a career.⁵

In India, there are nine recognized specialty branches in dentistry, which are conservative dentistry and endodontics, prosthodontics, orthodontics, periodontics, oral pathology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, oral medicine and radiology, public health dentistry, and pedodontics, that provide students with a wide scope in career and business as a specialist or a general practitioner.⁶

In recent times, in developing nations, very few studies have been done on the reasons behind choosing dentistry as a professional career due to the lack of evidence for this kind of study. Data are limited to the perception involved in the profession of prospective students or those who already belong to the dental field as students. All these studies have been carried out in developed countries from Europe, North America, and Oceania.⁷⁻⁹

AIM

To estimate the motivation and perception for choosing dentistry as a career among dental students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) of Udaipur city, Rajasthan, India.

OBJECTIVE

To counsel prospective dental students and contribute to planning of undergraduate and postgraduate programs in dentistry.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design, Setting, and Population

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among all dental students including undergraduates (first year to interns) and postgraduates of a dental college of Udaipur city, Rajasthan, India, in the month of October 2015.

The study population consisted of 350 dental students out of 600 dental students.

Ethical Clearance and Official Permission

The study protocol was reviewed by the ethical committee of the dental college and hospital and was granted ethical clearance.

Questionnaire

The structured questionnaire consisted of 26 items:

- Demographic questions including education and gender.
- Questions assessing motivation for choosing dentistry (18 questions).
- Questions assessing perception of choosing dentistry as a career (six questions).

Methodology

The questionnaire was administered to 50 subjects to check for reliability. Based on the responses, the questionnaire was slightly modified, and the test for reliability was done again. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.894 was found for the final questionnaire, which is acceptable. Based on the pilot study results, the final questionnaire was given to the study participants. Among the 350 participants, the questionnaires were distributed and the participants were requested to fill in the written informed consent form and asked to complete questionnaires choosing the most appropriate response. About 15 minutes was taken by the dental students to complete the questionnaire. Afterward, all the questionnaires were collected and analyzed.

Statistical Analysis

Completed questionnaires were coded and spreadsheets created for data entry. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.0 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, USA) software. Chi-square statistics was computed to determine differences between

Table 1: Demographic distribution of the study subjects

| Education | Male (n %) | Female (n %) | Total (n %) |
|---------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Undergraduate | 53 (15.1%) | 222 (63.4%) | 275 (78.6%) |
| Postgraduate | 35 (10.0%) | 40 (11.4%) | 75 (21.4%) |
| Total | 88 (25.1%) | 262 (74.9%) | 350 (100%) |

selected demographic variables regarding factors, such as motivation and perception for choosing dentistry as a career.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows a total of 350 dental students participated in the study. Demographic data showed that majority of the respondents were females [N = 262 (74.9%)]. Out of total respondents, 275 (78.6%) participants were undergraduates, while 75 (21.4%) were postgraduates. Table 2 shows the distribution of responses assessing motivation of choosing dentistry as a career.

About 52.4% undergraduates and 50.7% postgraduates students agree with the first question (dentistry was their first choice), while others did not. About 53.8% undergraduates and 62.7% postgraduates did not agree with the second question. About 80.7% undergraduates and 82.7% postgraduates thought that dentistry is a caring profession, while the remaining did not think so. About 60.0% undergraduates and 57.3% postgraduates heard about dentistry as a career in school. About 52.4% undergraduates agreed with fifth question, but 57.3% postgraduates did not agree (my family dentist encouraged me). About 53.8% undergraduates and 62.7% postgraduates chose dentistry because their close family persons are health workers. About 59.6% undergraduates and 68.0% postgraduates chose dentistry because of their family persuasion. About 61.5% undergraduates and 66.7% postgraduates had a good experience when they visited a family dentist. About 82.9% undergraduates and 84.0% postgraduates wanted to be self-employed. About 58.5% undergraduates and 53.3% postgraduates agreed with the 10th question because they thought that there is a career in dentistry as it offers job security.

About 78.2% undergraduates and 89.3% postgraduates wanted to help people to improve their appearance.

About 71.6 and 70.7% postgraduates chose dentistry because of flexible work hours. About 78.5% undergraduates and 80.0% postgraduates wished to provide service for public. About 55.6% undergraduates and 58.7% postgraduates wished to run a business in dentistry. About 60.4% undergraduates and 72.0% postgraduates did not agree with the 15th question, i.e., chose dentistry because of influence of friends. About 58.4% undergraduates and 52.0% postgraduates chose dentistry because they had

Table 2: Distribution of responses to questions assessing motivation of choosing dentistry as a career

| Question | Yes | | No | | χ^2 | p-value |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------|---------|
| | Undergraduate (n %) | Postgraduate (n %) | Undergraduate (n %) | Postgraduate (n %) | | |
| Was my first priority | 144 (52.4%) | 38 (50.7%) | 131 (47.6%) | 37 (49.3%) | 0.068 | 0.794 |
| One or more of my relatives is a dentist | 127 (46.2%) | 28 (37.3%) | 148 (53.8%) | 47 (62.7%) | 1.870 | 0.171 |
| Dentistry is a caring profession | 222 (80.7%) | 62 (82.7%) | 53 (19.3%) | 13 (17.3%) | 0.145 | 0.704 |
| I heard about dentistry as a career in school | 165 (60.0%) | 43 (57.3%) | 110 (40.0%) | 32 (42.7%) | 0.174 | 0.677 |
| My family dentist encouraged me | 144 (52.4%) | 32 (42.7%) | 131 (47.6%) | 43 (57.3%) | 2.217 | 0.137 |
| Any person in close family is a health worker | 148 (53.8%) | 47 (62.7%) | 127 (46.2%) | 28 (37.3%) | 1.870 | 0.171 |
| I choose dentistry because of family persuasion | 111 (40.4%) | 24 (32.0%) | 164 (59.6%) | 51 (68.0%) | 1.740 | 0.187 |
| I had a good experience when visited family dentist | 169 (61.5%) | 50 (66.7%) | 106 (38.5%) | 25 (33.3%) | 0.684 | 0.408 |
| I want to be self-employed | 228 (82.9%) | 63 (84.0%) | 47 (17.1%) | 12 (16.0%) | 0.050 | 0.823 |
| A career in dentistry offers job security | 161 (58.5%) | 40 (53.3%) | 114 (41.5%) | 35 (46.7%) | 0.655 | 0.418 |
| I want to help people to improve their appearance | 215 (78.2%) | 67 (89.3%) | 60 (21.8%) | 8 (10.7%) | 4.681 | 0.030 |
| Dentistry will give me more time to spend with my family due to flexible work hours | 197 (71.6%) | 53 (70.7%) | 78 (28.4%) | 22 (29.3%) | 0.027 | 0.869 |
| I wish to provide public service | 216 (78.5%) | 60 (80.0%) | 59 (21.5%) | 15 (20.0%) | 0.075 | 0.785 |
| To be able to run a business | 153 (55.6%) | 44 (58.7%) | 122 (44.4%) | 31 (41.3%) | 0.220 | 0.639 |
| I choose dentistry because of influence of friends | 109 (39.6%) | 21 (28.0%) | 166 (60.4%) | 54 (72.0%) | 3.418 | 0.065 |
| I choose dentistry because I had scientific knowledge | 160 (58.4%) | 39 (52.0%) | 114 (41.6%) | 36 (48.0%) | 1.258 | 0.53 |
| I choose dentistry because I had practical artistic skills | 158 (57.5%) | 41 (54.7%) | 117 (42.5%) | 34 (45.3%) | 0.187 | 0.666 |
| I choose dentistry to obtain professional status | 192 (69.8%) | 55 (73.3%) | 83 (30.2%) | 20 (26.7%) | 0.351 | 0.554 |

Chi square test, *p ≤ 0.05 statistically significant

scientific knowledge, while 57.5% undergraduates and 54.7% postgraduates chose dentistry because they had practical artistic skills. On the contrary, 69.8% undergraduates and 78.3% postgraduates chose dentistry to obtain a professional status.

After statistical analysis utilizing chi-square test, it was shown that the difference was not significant (p > 0.5) for all the following questions, except the 11th question, which showed the difference as significant (p < 0.5).

Table 3 shows the distribution of responses to questions assessing perception of choosing dentistry as a career. Where questions were asked to the respondents which showed majority of students two ninety three (83.71%) thought that dentistry is a challenging career, two ninety nine (85.42%) agreed that dentistry is an interesting career, two sixty (74.28%) were happy to choose dentistry as a career.

Table 4 shows the distribution of responses to questions assessing perception of choosing dentistry as a career. Where questions were asked to the respondents which showed 52.6% responses agreed with option 'b' of question that dentistry is confined to improving aesthetics,

Table 3: Distribution of responses to questions assessing perception of choosing dentistry as a career

| Questions | Yes | No |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Dentistry is a challenging career | 293 (83.71%) | 57 (16.3%) |
| Dentistry is an interesting career | 299 (85.42%) | 51 (14.58%) |
| Happy to choose dentistry as a career | 260 (74.28%) | 90 (25.72%) |

44.9% dental students wanted to do higher studies after BDS completion while 8.0% postgraduates wanted to go for both practice and academics.

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted on 350 dental students of the Dental College & Hospital, Debari, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, to determine the motivation and perception behind choosing dentistry as a career among dental students who were undergraduates or postgraduates. In our study, the aim was to obtain information about the differences on

Table 4: Distribution of responses to questions assessing perception of choosing dentistry as a career

| Questions | Responses |
|--|-------------|
| Dentistry is confined to | |
| [a] only treatment of teeth problems | 78 (22.3%) |
| [b] improving esthetics | 184 (52.6%) |
| [c] surgical correction of maxillofacial anomalies | 88 (25.0%) |
| What do you want to do after BDS completion? | |
| [a] private practice | 69 (19.7%) |
| [b] higher studies | 157 (44.9%) |
| [c] change my profession | 27 (7.7%) |
| [d] migrate abroad | 65 (18.6%) |
| [e] government service | 32 (9.2%) |
| For postgraduate students after completing the course, I want to | |
| [a] practice | 22 (6.3%) |
| [b] be an academician | 5 (1.4%) |
| [c] both | 28 (8.0%) |
| [d] join government services | 10 (2.9%) |
| [e] change my profession | 1 (.3%) |
| [f] migrate abroad | 9 (2.6%) |

why undergraduate and postgraduate dental students chose dentistry as a professional career.

Totally, 275 (78.6%) undergraduate students and 75 (21.4%) postgraduate students participated in the study, out of this, 88 (25.1%) were males and 262 (74.9%) were females.

In this study, dentistry was my first priority, one or more of my relatives is a dentist, dentistry is a caring profession, heard about dentistry as a career in school, my family dentist encouraged me, any person in close family is a health worker, had a good experience when visited family dentist, want to be self-employed, dentistry career offers job security, want to help people to improve their appearance, due to flexible work hours, provide public service, able to run a business in dentistry, chose dentistry because of family persuasion, chose dentistry because of influence of friends, had a scientific knowledge and practical artistic skills, and chose dentistry to get professional status are the motivating factors for choosing dentistry as a career.

On the contrary, dentistry is a challenging and interesting career, happy to choose dentistry as a career, dentistry is confined to dental treatment, surgical corrections, what do you want to do after completing BDS and MDS are the factors of perception for choosing dentistry as a career.

This study showed the higher number of students choose dentistry as their first priority, while other studies showed that lesser number of students choose dentistry as their first priority.^{10,11} The reasons might be due to more awareness among the students regarding the dental field, and they wanted to set up a dental clinic with recent advancements.

A number of students found that the dental students wanted to be their own boss or self-employed, and they were inclined to providing public service and helping people. They chose dentistry as a career because it offers job security with flexible working hours, but they also chose dentistry because of their friends and family encouragement.^{10,12-15} In our study, the motivating factors also reported similar results (flexibility, self-employment, job security, public services, family persuasion, and friends encouragement).

This study showed that the maximum number of students view dentistry as a caring profession, and they heard about dentistry as a career in school. Similar results were shown by other studies also.^{11,12}

Some studies also reveal that students chose dentistry to earn a lot of money and also wanted to improve the person's appearance.^{12,15,16} Our study also showed similar results.

Most of the students (undergraduates and postgraduates) reported being happy with their profession and when we compared it with other studies, we found that 48.6% of interns were happy with the dental profession.¹⁷

The study done by Kapoor et al¹⁶ showed that 92.8% dental professionals were happy and enjoyed helping and improving appearance of people. Similar results were shown by us too that dentistry is not only confined to improving esthetics, but there are other aspects of dentistry also, such as surgical treatments, conservative and endodontic treatment, prosthetic treatment, implants, diagnostic and treatment planning of oral cancer, as well as oral hygiene care, but in reality, most of the dental students and professionals focus only on the esthetic part of the dentistry. The reasons behind this might be economical and other requisites, such as career in various fields (modeling, films, acting for TV serials, news channels, jobs, and other personal benefits). Due to these reasons, people are more interested toward esthetics.

This study also showed that after completing BDS, most of the students wanted to do higher studies, and after completing MDS, students wanted to do both (practice and be an academician), while in other studies also, the results are similar.^{17,18}

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that dentistry is the first choice for both undergraduates and postgraduates. There were no significant differences between undergraduates and postgraduates regarding motivating and perceptive factors. Job security, self-employment, money factor, flexibility in working hours, scientific and practical artistic knowledge, and to get professional status are factors that play a crucial role behind choosing dentistry as a professional career.

Improving esthetics is also an important perceptive factor in our study, which clearly devotes the reason of giving priority to choosing dentistry as a profession. Hence, it may be a good idea to establish educational programs in dental colleges to educate students regarding aspects of dentistry other than improving esthetics.

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