



General Perception of Dental Students about Dentistry

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Abstract

Aim: The study was aimed to get the views of students regarding motivating factors for opting dentistry as a career.

Material and Method: 400 dental students were given a set of questionnaire in the college and it was retrieved from them immediately after filling up.

Results: The motivating factors ranged from the factors related to job security, financial benefit and prestigious profession. There were few students who wanted to change their profession.

Conclusion: There should be more and more educating and interactive sessions for students at high school levels which may help them in opting a better career.

Keywords: Dental Students; Motivating Factors; Perception

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that Dentistry is considered as a noble profession. The right motivation toward choosing a career is of utmost importance for the successful completion of studies. Choice of dentistry as occupation is limited to a small percentage of the community, especially in the developing countries [1]. Motives for choosing a career are complex, and a choice of dentistry as a career is no exception. While deciding on a career choice, one has to consider many factors which include factors related to work conditions and financial rewards, nature of occupation, use of personal or manual skills, security and status, working with people, and interest in science and research [2].

Different studies have been done in different countries regarding the choosing dentistry as a career. So many different reasons have been mentioned like status and security, the nature of occupation, patient care and working with people [2-5]. Few students reported self-employment and business-related motives as important [5], while others, perceived ease of employment, being self-employed, working regular hours and good income and the opportunity to help people as reasons for entering the profession [4].

Investigation of motivations related to gender showed that there were differences between male and female students in their motivation. Females were less concerned than male students with the business component of choosing a career and more concerned with caring and people factors [6].

In India, the dentistry program (under graduate) is for 5 years. Entrance to the program depends on results of the common entrance tests or its equivalent. In developing nations, there is a limited information on the career choices of students, hence the study was conducted to determine the motives and perceptions of dental students about dentistry.

Material and Method

Sample Design

Study population in the survey included 400 participants from all the Dental Colleges in Ludhiana city in Punjab. Stratified random sampling was done based on the year with 100 students from each year selected from the different dental colleges. The students were randomly selected by taking their consent. A set of questionnaire was given to the students. These students were asked to complete it in the college. It was made clear to them that the identity would not be disclosed, and they were asked to give their frank opinion.

Questionnaire design

Questionnaire was developed on the basis of previously reported questions in the similar studies. [1],[3],[4]

The proforma consisted of two parts. The first part included the general information like age, gender, education, and year of study. The second part consisted of close-ended questions based on previous studies [1,3,4], with some additions related to cultural and family influences.

It consisted of 25 questions as shown below:

1. Was dentistry your first priority?
2. One or more of my relatives is a dentist
3. Dentistry is a caring profession
4. I heard about dentistry as a career in high school
5. I heard about dentistry as a career in college
6. My family dentist encouraged me
7. Any person in close family are health worker
8. I have good opportunity to be employed by government
9. I chose dentistry because of family persuasion
10. I always wanted to be a dentist
11. I had a good experience when visiting the family dentist
12. It is easy for dentists to find employment
13. I want to be self-employed
14. A career in dentistry offers job security
15. I want to help people to improve their appearance
16. Dentistry will give me more time to spend with my family
17. A dentist has a flexible schedule
18. I would like to make lot of money
19. Dentistry is a prestigious profession
20. I worked in a dental-related field and now I want to become a dentist
21. I can work in several fields of the dentistry without holding a specialty
22. Dentistry is a challenging and interesting career
23. The course and the work provide opportunity for creativity
24. What I want to do after completion?
 - Private practice
 - Higher studies
 - Change my profession
25. For postgraduate students
 - After completing I want to
 - Practice
 - Be a academician
 - Both
 - Join government service
 - Change my profession

Figure 1

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using the SPSS package version 15. Kruskal-Wallis test was used to find out the level of significance. Mann-Whitney test was used to find a significant difference among pair of groups. Factor analysis was carried to group motives into related clusters. The difference was considered as statistically significant if $P < 0.05$.

Among the 600 subjects, 210 (35%) were males and 390 (65%) were females.

For 233 (38.83%) participants the first choice was dentistry. High positive response was received (94.33%) regarding Dentistry a Caring Profession. About 410 (68.33%) had heard about dentistry as a career in high school, whereas 388 (64.67%) heard about dentistry as a career in college. This was the Responses received for Q1 to Q8 across the study sample.

Factor analysis was done for Q9-23. After the factor analysis, 15 questions were grouped under five factors.

- Factor 1: Influence - is composed of motives that make up the interest, external pressures and employment opportunities to choose dentistry as a career. Q-9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, got loaded here, which explained 14.3% of information.
- Factor 2: Profession - is related to dentistry as a profession and the challenges involved therein. Q-13, 19, 22, 23, got loaded here, and the information explained was 13.90%.
- Factor 3: Flexibility - relates to the freedom a Dentist can have in his/her profession, Q-17 got loaded here which explained 9.70% of the information.
- Factor 4: Remuneration - relates to the earnings from dentistry as a profession, Q-15, 18 got loaded here where 9.30% of the information was explained.
- Factor 5: Versatility - represents the opportunities for a dentist in different fields without specialization, Q-21 got loaded here where 7.30% of the information was explained.

Postgraduates showed high positive response (24.03%) to do private practice; 17.90% of undergraduates opted to do higher studies and 25.93% of interns wanted to change their profession. This was the responses received for Q24 across the study sample.

About 3% wanted to practice, 4% wanted to be an academician, 83% wanted to do both 5% of them wanted to join government service, and 5% of them wanted to change the profession. This was the responses received for Q25 across the study sample.

- Q9, Q11, Q13, Q15, Q18, Q21, Q22 and Q23: No statistically significant difference was observed between the students studying in different years of dentistry with respect to the agreement scores ($P > 0.05$).
- Q10, Q12 and Q14: The agreement scores were significantly different between the students studying in different years of dentistry ($P < 0.001$). The level of agreement decreased from 1st year B.D.S students to post graduate students in all the above questions.
- Q16, Q19 and Q20: The difference in agreement scores was significant between the students in different years of dentistry ($P < 0.01$).
- Q17: The difference in agreement scores was found to be significant among the students in different years of dentistry ($P < 0.05$).

Discussion

Dentists occupy an important position in society as professional health care workers. Choosing dentistry as a career has been a topic of research since ages. The findings, based on comparisons between universities, different classes at the same university and different demographically constituted classes, as well as comparisons over time, demonstrate a remarkable consistency [7]. Students take dentistry as a profession because they wish to serve others, to be independent, work with their hands, acquire status, prestige and financial security, and work a 9 a.m.-5 p.m. day [7].

Seventy percent of the students participating in the study were females. This high percentage of females entering the field of dentistry is comparable with other studies [1,3]. In the present study, caring profession as a motivating factors has got the maximum score 92.8%. In other study conducted by Al-Bitar, *et al.* prestige (44%) and helping people (43%) were the motivating factor in their career [3].

The current study demonstrated a changing perception of dental students toward dentistry. First-year students were more concerned about the factors related to job security, financial benefit and prestigious profession in selecting dentistry as a profession. However, this agreement decreased as the students reached internship or postgraduation. The reason might be due to dissatisfaction with remuneration, poor job vacancy, not competent enough to start practice etc., similar observations were also reported in other study [7].

Factor analysis was carried out and resulted in five factors that accounted for 50% of the variance in the agreement items. Factors 1 - 3 accounted for 35% of the variance. These factors are used to cluster motives and perceptions which are important factors for choosing dentistry as a career.

In Britain, it was reported that the most quoted reason for choice of their career depended on a fairly detailed knowledge of dentistry and about 50% of all applicants had visited a dental clinic as an invited observer. Most of them rated this visit as very important in their career choices. Such visits would help in increasing interest in dentistry [8].

Private practice that is a common motive for choosing dentistry in many studies appears not to be an easy option because of financial constraints [1,4,7,9]. In this study the motive for choosing den-

tistry was to do private practice, the percentage increased from 1st years (16.39%) to postgraduates (28.33%).

There were few students who wanted to change their profession (15%). This is unfortunate as resources and energy had been invested by both the students and the educators. We should incorporate interactive sessions that would seek to know the mindset of students, otherwise, it will lead to stress and job dissatisfaction. In this study, 70% of postgraduates wanted to be in academics as well as practice.

Conclusion

The present study gives a glance to the thinking of students regarding their profession. It was concluded that for choosing dentistry as a career, prestigious profession, financial security, flexibility, self-employment were found to be important motivating and perception factors. Guidance and counseling of high school and college students to visit dental clinics are desirable and educational programs in the colleges should be conducted to educate students on their career choice and employment opportunities.

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