

## Career Preferences after Graduation Among Dental Students in a Teaching Hospital in Nepal

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Choosing a career is an important decisions one can make for a bright future. Preference for a speciality after graduating from dental school is a difficult decision. Dental graduates reach a concrete decision only after a better understanding of dentistry during their undergraduate study period. The aim of this study is to identify the career choices and speciality preferences of undergraduate dental students studying at the B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal.

**Methodology:** This is a descriptive, cross-sectional survey conducted among 209 undergraduate dental students. A standardized, custom-made questionnaire consisting of nine multiple-choice questions were distributed among the participant. Participants were advised to choose the single best suitable answer. Frequency, percentage, and mean were used to express descriptive statistics.

**Results:** Among the 209 participants, 89 were boys (42.6%) and 120 were girls (57.4%). The mean age was 22.18 years ranging from 18 to 27 years. Almost all participants 204 (97.6%) wanted to continue their dental carrier and only 5 (2.4%) wanted to change their dental career. Also, 186 (89%) wished to pursue a Master of Dental Surgery (MDS) of which 92 (49.5%) have a preference for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (OMFS). Many participants 75 (40.3%) wished to go abroad for further study.

**Conclusion:** Almost all participants wanted to continue their future career in dentistry with the most preferring dental career was practicing in a government hospital. Also, most of the undergraduate students wanted to study MDS with OSMF being the most preferred speciality. A large number of participants wished to go abroad for further study in search of better learning opportunities and few wished to settle overseas.

**Keywords:** Career Preference; Dentistry; Dental Graduates; Dental Speciality

### Introduction

Choosing a career is an important decision one can make for a bright future. The willingness to choose dentistry as a career option provides self-employment, respect, social and professional status, increased quality of life, above-average income, and artistic challenges [1]. Choosing a speciality after graduating from dental school is a difficult decision. Dental graduates reach a concrete decision for dental speciality only after a better understanding of dentistry during the undergraduate study period. Professional

guidance, abilities, and experience acquired during dental school are likely to influence future expectations, career choices, and professional happiness of dental students in years to come [2]. Fresh graduates face the dilemma of deciding on a future career and specialization after completing their undergraduate degrees. The reason behind this dilemma is a lack of awareness regarding the scope of different specializations and the availability of training in dentistry [3]. There are many career preferences, such as clinical practice in a dental college or hospital, opening one's private den-

tal clinic, shifting to another profession, or pursuing further study in one’s own country or abroad. After graduation, some dental students may shift to another non-dental profession because of a lack of interest in dentistry or a lack of opportunities in specialty courses because of the high ratio of undergraduate to postgraduate seats in many countries. According to several studies, the majority of dental students desire to continue their dental education in order to pursue a specialist degree [4].

Research conducted in the United Kingdom has revealed an increase in the desire for postgraduate studies among dental graduates. There were 83% of new dental graduates who had a desire for specialization [5]. However, the intake capacity of postgraduate seats in dentistry is very limited when compared with graduate seats [6]. Similar conditions exist in Nepal too. According to the Medical Education Commission Nepal’s most recent report, the total intake capacity for a bachelor’s degree in dental surgery is 565, while that of a postgraduate degree is only 75. Thus, this study was carried out with the aim to identify the career choices and speciality preferences among undergraduate dental students studying at the B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, Nepal.

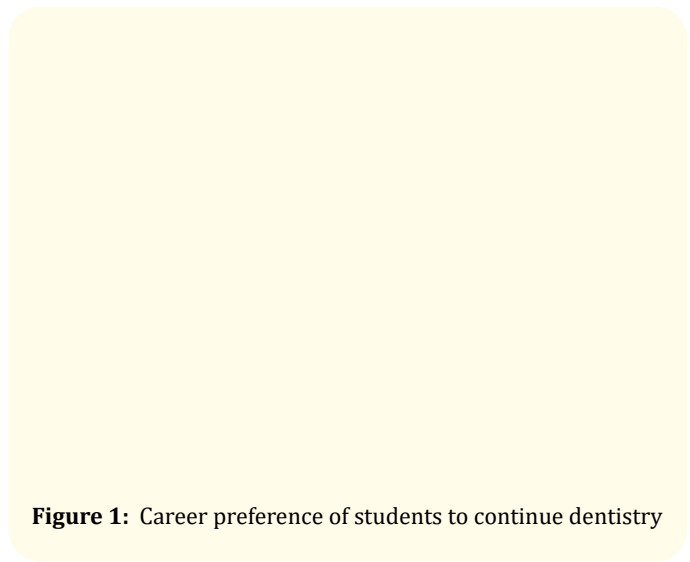
**Methodology**

We conducted a descriptive, cross-sectional survey among 209 undergraduate dental students studying at B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan Nepal. Students from the first year to the internship were included in this study. Undergraduate students not willing for this survey and dental surgeons working in the institute were excluded from the study. This study was approved by Institutional Review Committee (IRC Code number: IRC 2453/023). All the undergraduate students were informed about the purpose of this study and also confidentiality was assured through the information sheet. All participants signed written informed consent after being fully informed with participants information sheet. Nine multiple-choice questions from a standardized, specially made questionnaire were given to each participant. Participants were asked to choose a single best suitable answer. All the collected data were verified for completeness and then entered into Microsoft Excel and results were obtained using SPSS version 11.5 software. Frequency, percentage, and mean were used to express descriptive statistics.

**Results**

In this study, 209 students completed the questionnaire, which had nine questions about career and speciality preferences. In the study, among the 209 participants, 89 (42.6%) were boys and 120 (57.4%) were girls. The mean age was 22.18 years ranging from 18 to 27 years. Among total participants 204 (97.6%) were Nepal-

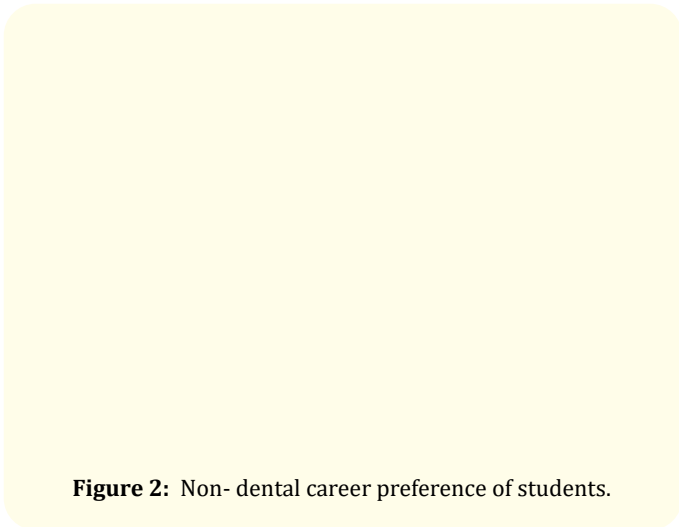
ese and 5 (2.4%) were Indian students. Among Nepalese students, 62 (29.7%) were residents of state 1 followed by 53 (25.4%), 37 (17.7%), 21 (10.0%), 12 (5.7), 8 (3.8%), 8 (3.8%) from state 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively. Most of the participants were unmarried 204 (97.6%). Upon asking whether they wanted to continue a career in dentistry after graduation? 204 (97.6%) replied yes whereas only 5 (2.4%) said not to continue their career in dentistry (Figure 1). Among the dental career, the top three most preferred careers were practice in government hospitals 65 (31.9%) followed by practice in teaching institutes 64 (31.4%), and practice in private hospitals and clinics 40 (19.6%) (Table 1). Among those who decided not to continue their career in dentistry, 1 (20%) planned to continue his future career with MBA in hospital administration and 2 (40%) each business outside the dental field and a master in public health (Figure 2).



**Figure 1:** Career preference of students to continue dentistry

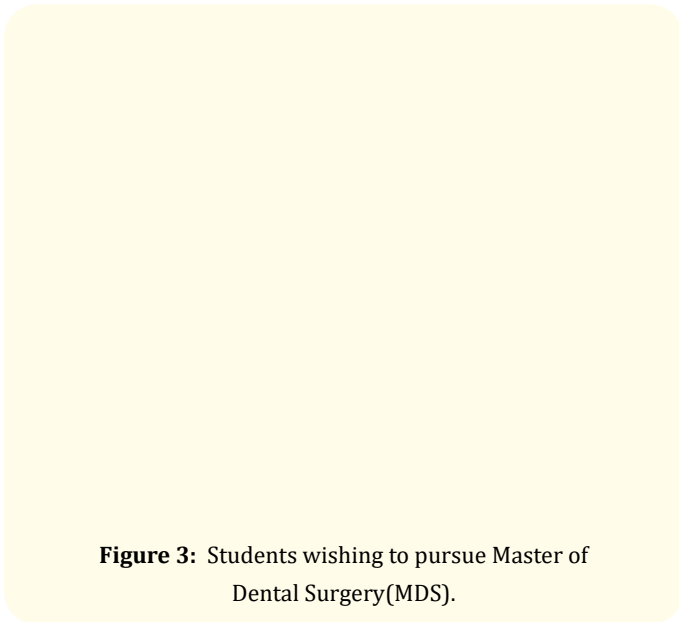
S. No	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Practice in a government hospital	65	31.9
2.	Private hospital or clinic practice.	40	19.6
3.	Opening my own clinic	30	14.7
4	Practice in the teaching institute	64	31.4
5	Others	5	2.5
Total		204	100

**Table 1:** Dental career preferences among students after graduation

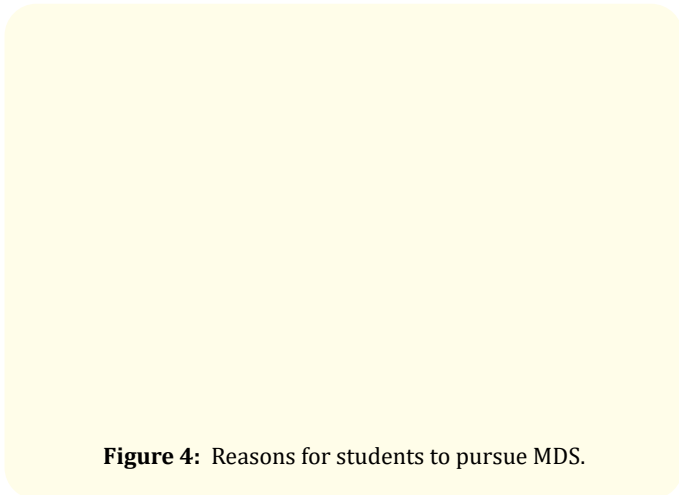


**Figure 2:** Non- dental career preference of students.

In this study, most of the participants, 186 (91.2%) wished to pursue a Master of Dental Surgery (MDS) after completion of undergraduate (Figure 3). Academic growth 114 (61.3%), personal interest 36 (19.4%), and good income 17 (9.1%) were the three most popular reasons given for their MDS study (Figure 4). Few students 18 (8.8%) thought studying MDS is not necessary after graduation because almost half of them who didn't want to study MDS wished to open their own dental clinic 10 (55.6%) and few students wished to obtain diploma courses 5 (27.8%) (Table 2).



**Figure 3:** Students wishing to pursue Master of Dental Surgery (MDS).



**Figure 4:** Reasons for students to pursue MDS.

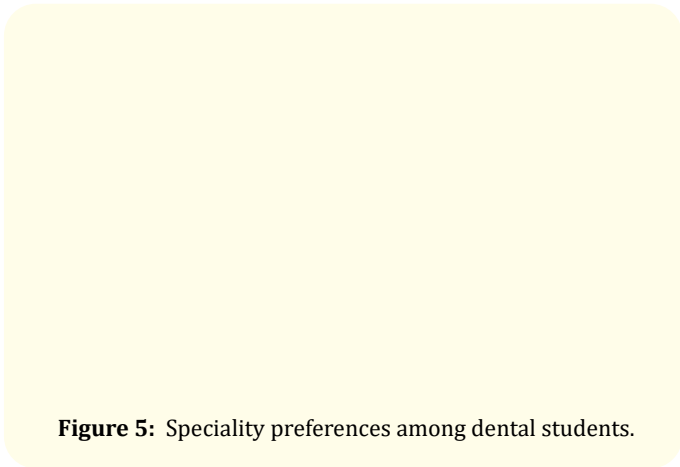
S. No	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Financial reason	1	5.6
2.	Open my own clinic	10	55.6
3.	Want to obtain a dental diploma course	5	27.8
5	Start dental material business	2	11.1
Total		18	100

**Table 2:** Reasons for not pursuing MDS.

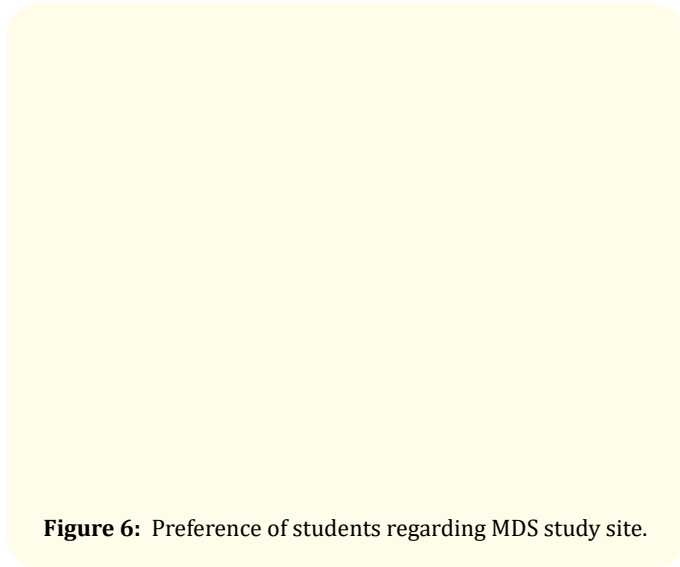
When asked which branch they would most likely choose for their specialty after graduation, it was found that 92 (49.5%) participants wished to pursue MDS in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, with 21 (11.3%) Conservative and Endodontics, and 19 (10.2%) orthodontics (Figure 5). When question asked regarding the country from where they wished to study MDS, 75 (40.3%) participants wanted to go abroad, 59 (31.7%) have not yet decided whether they will study postgraduate from Nepal or abroad, and 52 (28%) wished to study in Nepal (Figure 6). The most common reason to go overseas was better learning opportunities 44 (58.7%) followed by them wanted to settle abroad 20 (26.7%) (Table 3).

**Discussion**

This descriptive observational survey was carried out among 209 undergraduate dental students of BPKIHS, Dharan, Nepal. The purpose of this survey was to identify career choices and pre-



**Figure 5:** Speciality preferences among dental students.



**Figure 6:** Preference of students regarding MDS study site.

S. No	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very competitive in Nepal because of the limited number of PG seats.	3	4.0
2.	Poor training in Nepal	1	1.3
3	Better learning opportunities	44	58.7
4	Want to settle abroad	20	26.5
5	Prestige of an international degree	7	9.3
Total		75	100

**Table 3:** Resons for students wishing to pursue MDS abroad.

ferred specialties following graduation. In our study, most of the undergraduate students, 204 (97.6%) wanted to continue a career in dentistry. This study is similar to the study done by Kannan R [13]. and Rathos S., *et al.* [1], where 85.9% and 77% of participants wanted to continue a career in dentistry respectively. The present study also showed that 5 (2.4%) wanted to change their dental career. This finding is similar to the study done Kannan R [13] and Rathod S., *et al.* [1], where 14.1% and 23% of participants wanted to change their career out of dentistry respectively.

In this study, 5 (2.4%) students wanted to change their profession to work in an area other than dentistry. Out of those 5 students, 4 (80%) wanted to do either business outside the dental field or a master in public health and 1 (20%) wanted MBA in hospital administration. 14.1% of participants in research by Kannan R [13] planned to change their career from dentistry to business and management and other streams of professionalism.

Upon being asked about the most preferred dental career they wished to work after graduation, 65 (31.9%) wanted to practice in a government hospital followed by 64 (31.4%), who wanted to practice in a teaching institute. As a part of study done by Halawany HS., *et al.* [4]. Showed 51.1% wanted to choose a civilian dentist in the public sector followed by academic service dentistry (23.7%).

In this study, 186 (91.2%) wished to pursue a Master of Dental Surgery (MDS) after completion of undergraduate and only 18 (8.8%) thought MDS is not necessary to continue a career in dentistry. This study is similar to the study done by Garg D., *et al.* [11], and Rathod S., *et al.* [1]. where 92.9% and 93.16% wanted to pursue MDS courses in the future respectively. In a few other studies, (Garla BK [14]., and Aggarwal A., *et al.* [15]. 57.39% and 79.1% respectively) a slightly less percentage of undergraduate students wanted to peruse MDS.

Upon asking the reason behind studying postgraduate, 114 (61.3%) participants thought studying MDS will help them to achieve better academic growth followed by personal inters 36 (19.4%) . In a study done by Garla BK [14]., participants wanted to achieve postgraduate for better wages and job prospects.

In present study, it was found that 92 (49.5%) participants would most likely choose Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, with 21 (11.3%) choosing conservative and endodontics, and 19 (10.2%) choosing orthodontics. In a study by Garg D. et al [11], 48.4% of students wished for Oral and Maxillofacial surgery as their first choice followed by Orthodontics, Conservative Dentistry, Pedodontics, Oral Medicine and Radiology, Prosthodontics, Community Dentistry, Periodontics and Oral Pathology.

Upon asking where would they like to study postgraduate? 75 (40.3%) of participants wanted to go abroad for further study, 59 (31.7% students told they have not yet decided whether they will study postgraduate from Nepal or abroad, and 52 (28%) participants wanted to study in Nepal. Almost half of the participants 44 (58.7% thought they will get better learning opportunities if will go overseas for further study and 20 (26.7%) students wanted to settle in a foreign country. In a study by Rathod S [1], 72.6% of participants wanted to study or work overseas after their BDS. Aggarwal A., et al. [15]. also reported that 30.1% of the students wanted to go abroad because of better opportunities for study.

### Limitations

Views of some students could not be possible to include in this study due to their absence on the day of the survey and the most preferred single response of participants was only considered.

### Conclusion

Within the limitations of this study, it can be concluded that almost all participants wanted to continue their future career in dentistry with the most preferred dental career as practicing in a government hospital. Also, most of the undergraduate students wanted to study MDS with OSMF being the most preferred speciality. A large number of participants wished to go abroad for further study in search of better learning opportunities and also few wished to settle there.

### Acknowledgment

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