



FUTURE EXPECTATIONS, CAREER CHALLENGES AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG DENTAL STUDENTS

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Abstract:

One of the crucial decisions making in someone's life is choosing the right career. Career choice is the turning point in everyone's life. Dentistry is a career option that offers various job opportunities. However, budding dentists are worried due to the increasing number of graduate seats.

Therefore, there is a need to conduct a study involving students to assess their attitudes toward their future career challenges in the dental profession.

Material and methods:-

A cross-sectional survey was conducted on 325 students in which students from 1st to 4th Year and intern students of Latur in the year 2022 participated. A structured questionnaire was distributed and collected from the students and the data were recorded in the Excel sheet. Statistical analysis was performed with the help of the students' t-test.

Results:

The majority of females participated in our study. 83.4% of female respondents from different age groups felt balance between workplace and home is the main difficulty to encounter in dentistry. 84.9% of students think that there is a need for postgraduation and the Majority of students (55.7%) prefer to do postgraduation in the field of oral maxillofacial surgery. Almost half of the students (46.5%) wish to work in a metro city. Most of the students (78.8 %) feel dentistry is a secure option in the long term perspective.

Conclusion:

The future of dentistry is influenced by young dentists with their perception and view towards dentistry. Professional skills and academic knowledge gained during tenure will assist the student in structuring their future expectations and career choices for professional satisfaction.

Index Terms -: Career choice, challenges in dentistry, job opportunity.

Introduction

Dentistry is a subspecialty of medicine which is the profession concerned with the prevention and treatment of oral diseases and providing better information of teeth and their surrounding structures. Dental surgeon establishes a pivotal role in society as a healthcare professional. However, choosing dentistry as a career option is influenced by many factors such as financial stability, social status, and family background. [1,2,3, 4,5]

The objective of this study was to explore the short-term and long-term goals of dental students.

Short-term career aspirations of students involve professional experience, and personal and financial stability whereas, long-term career expectations include anticipation of professional development, work-life balance, and financial security.

MATERIAL AND METHOD:

Study population:

Dental students from 1st to 4th year and interns were involved in this cross-sectional survey of MIDSR Dental College, Latur in the year 2022. The total number of students who participated in this survey was 325. This survey

was carried out with the approval of the institutional ethical committee and the consent of the student. [Ethical committee approval no. MIDSRS/STU/IEC-113/837/2022.]

The sample size was calculated using the following formula:

$$n = N * X / (X + N - 1),$$

Where,

$$X = Z_{\alpha/2}^2 * p * (1-p) / MOE^2,$$

Data collection:

The data was collected through Google Forms and hardcopy containing a list of questionnaires.

A self-designed questionnaire was distributed to the students for a period of 30 min in the classroom (lecture Hall). The purpose of the study was explained to the students before the distribution of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire includes a total of 22 questions. Out of which, 5 questions for knowing sociodemographic details. 5 questions about the vision of dental students and 12 questions about future expectations (short-term and long-term career expectations.)

Inclusion criteria:

1st to 4th year students and interns of MIDSRS Dental College were included.

Exclusion criteria:

Students not willing to participate in the study were excluded.

RESULT

The total no of respondents who participated in this survey was 325 of which the majority of the respondents were female 271 (88.4%) and 54 (16.6%) were males from 1st to 4th year and interns.

In this study, 92 students were below 20 years of age, 65 students from the 20 - 21 Year group, 79 students from the age group 21-22 years, and 89 students from the age group of 23-24 years.

As this study was conducted to obtain short-term and long-term future career expectations of dental students towards dentistry, the results were presented in 3 sections, the First section about the vision of dental students, the second section about short-term career expectations, and the third about long-term career expectations.

The vision of dental students

When students were asked about “Whether they have any dentist in their family circle, relatives or friends” 74(22.7%) students reported that they had chosen dentistry because, they were inspired by their family dentist, and 251(77.2%) of students chosen dentistry, without having a dentist in their family because of their interest. When the question was asked, “Being in a non-dental background does it require more time to settle down as compared to a dentist with a dental background?” 289(88.9%) of students think dentistry is a challenging course that requires more time to settle. Students were also asked, ‘Will they prefer dentistry as a career option to their relatives or friends?’ 224(68.9%) of students would like to motivate their relatives and friends to opt for dentistry. 61(18.8%) students had considered dentistry as their 1st career option after NEET UG. whereas, 262 (80.6%) of students never considered dentistry as their first choice, because they had no other choices left. When asked, ‘Reason behind choosing dentistry as a career?’ 34(10.5 %) students said for financial benefits, 34(10.5%) of students said for job security 38 students (42.5 %) wanted to do dentistry for professional status to gain a tag of doctor and 119(36.6 %) of students had own interest. when students were asked, “Whether they have thought about dropping out of college”. 73(22.6%) of students have thought of dropping out due to difficulty in passing exams. When the question was asked that “The education provided by dental college met your professional expectations?” 78(24%) of students think that the education provided by dental college doesn’t meet their professional expectations. this could be one reason for dropping out of college. when they were asked “Whether they get proper exposure to the patient in college” a few students that are 39(12%) replied that not getting enough patient exposure in college could be the reason for dropping college. Whereas, 286(88%) replied “yes” that they get enough patient exposure. If the patient exposure is good enough, it builds confidence in the students which improves working skills.

Short-term carrier expectations

The majority of students 196 students (60.3%) wished of doing postgraduation when they were asked about their career plans in the upcoming 5 years. 53(16.3%) students wanted to work in a government hospital. 29(8.9%) of students wish to go abroad whereas, 27(8.3%) of respondents wanted to start their own clinic while remaining 20(6.2%) students wanted to practice in private clinic.

When students were asked ‘Do you want to change career after completing the undergraduate course in dentistry?’ 152(46.8%) of students said ‘yes’ and 173(53.2%) of students choose to continue the dental practice. The reason behind that could be a lack of motivation or self-interest towards dentistry.

Long-term career expectations

276(84.9%) respondents wished to do specialization after completing their BDS. As they think specialization is necessary after BDS. Among those who wanted to do specialization, they were asked about their preferred branch. The majority of students 161(58.3%) wanted to specialize in oral maxillofacial surgery, whereas, only 13(4%) of students showed interest doing post-graduation in oral medicine and radiology. When asked about student's motives behind choosing a specialized branch. The majority of students 142(43.7%) chose it because of more clinical experience followed by 106(32.6%) students choosing it due to high-income source followed by 77(23.7%) students choosing it as their favorite branch. As dentistry is a profession with flexible work hours. When students were asked, about their preferences for working hours in the practice. 175(53.8%) of participants wanted to work part time and 150(46.2%) of population wanted to work full time. A total of 151(46.5%) students want to practice in metropolitan cities, 97(5.8%) students want to work in government hospitals followed by 47(14.5%) students in the private sector. 19(5.8%) students in university hospitals and unfortunately very less students that is, 11(3.4%) students want to serve services in rural areas. There are numerous challenges in running a dental practice like balancing work life and Home, balancing good patient-doctor relationships, and handling annoying patients. When the question was asked to females regarding difficulties encountered in dentistry. The majority of them about 205(75%) students felt difficulty in maintaining balance between work place and home. Whereas, 39(12%) respondents think communication with the BAD patient is a challenge, 33(10.2%) students think that financial management is a difficulty, 9(3%) of respondents lack in confidence whereas, 15(5.5%) females think that don't get family support for the job. Through the survey, it came out that more than half of the respondents 256(78.8%) students think according to a long-term perspective. When asked "What is the major challenge in dentistry as a profession?" 113(34.7%) students think that an Increased number of dental graduates pass out every year. 84(25.8%) students think that increased professional competition and 48(14.7%) student think job insecurity could be challenges in dentistry.

DISCUSSION

This study was carried out to explore the future, short-term and long-term expectations, career choices, and related factors among dental students. Our study showed female predominance compared to male. In our study, family background or dentist in the family was the influencing factor for career selection, and similar results were shown in the study conducted by Dr. Usama Nassa et al in the year 2016 in Canada. ^[6]

The short-term career expectations of students were focused on knowledge gained by students, improving their skills.

In our study, about 80% of respondents preferred dentistry as an alternative to medicine similar result was shown in the study conducted by Bhagwani et al. in 2017 in her study. and also 76.5% of people from a study conducted by Rahul G et al in 2020, the students had chosen dentistry based on marks obtained in the entrance exam. In the short-term expectation, students were more focused on doing specialization and practicing dental work, they think that dentistry is a secure option in the long term perspective because it has more flexible work hours, the best use of skills, and a higher income source. ^[7,8]

In our study, a strong desire of dental students was seen to do specialization after graduation which is similar to the result found in the study conducted by, Alrashdan et al. (In our study, in short-term career expectations, students desired to work in a government hospital, 8.9% wanted to work abroad and 8.3% wanted to start own private clinic while, 6.2% students wanted to practice in a private clinic. A similar result was found in the survey of kettler et al in 2017 and Ghandhi et al. in 2020.) ^[9,10]

In our study, From the given options of choosing branches of dentistry, 58% of students were interested in doing PG in the OMFS branch, similar to the study conducted by Aditya. et al which provides the same interest of students towards the oral surgery branch. ^[11] Whereas, in the study conducted by Chao Xu et al. in 2022 most of the students gave priority to a prosthodontic branch. ^[12]

In our study, regarding long-term career expectations, more than half of the respondents wanted to work full-time, similar results were shown in the study conducted by che musa et al study. ^[13]

14.5 % of students from our study wish to work in the private sector similar result was found in the study conducted by Sharma et al. where 13.2 % of students in their study wish to work in the private sector and only 3% of students wish to serve in the rural area and the same result which concurs with the findings from the studies of dental schools in the UK by Gallagher JE et al ^[14,15]

In the British study half (51.8%) of women intended to work part-time and similarly, in our study, 53.8% of students wish to work part-time. ^[16]

In our study, Female respondents reported that they face the challenge of balancing work and family similar results were found in a survey by Karagir et al in 2021. ^[1]

In our study, when students were asked about advising their friends/ siblings to take up dentistry, 68.9% said yes, they would suggest. while 31.1% denied them from taking up dentistry as a career. a similar study conducted in Bhubaneshwar, in which 81.74% said yes, while 18.26% denied taking up dentistry as a career. ^[17]

CONCLUSION

The career aspirations and plans of the interns and final year dental students in this dental college revolved around achieving financial, personal, and professional goals; However, Attitudes and perceptions may change over time, subject to opportunities and interests. However, the overall students in the present study exhibited positive attitudes and perceptions toward choosing their future careers.

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