

CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND REASONS FOR CHOOSING DENTISTRY AS A CAREER – A SURVEY OF DENTAL STUDENTS IN GANDHI DENTAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL, BHUBANESWAR.

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ABSTRACT

The motivations for choosing a career are yet not clearly defined. The purpose of this study was to investigate why students at Gandhi Dental College had chosen dentistry as their career, to consider the factors that had influenced their decision and to study their different career goals. Career aspiration of Dental students was assessed with the help of a questionnaire which was distributed among dental students and interns. Answers were then analyzed to find differences between the groups. The overall response rate was 86%. Main reason to enter this profession was their own interest (53.91%). 57.39% of the undergraduates and interns aspired to do post-graduation for better salaries and good job opportunities. 62.17% wanted to go abroad for further studies commonly to the USA and wished for some career counseling in this regard. When asked whether they would advice their friends to take up dentistry 81.74% said yes mainly because of good scope while 18.26% said no due to factors like increased stress and saturation in this field.

KEY WORDS: career aspiration, Dentistry, Career

INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. The choice of Dentistry as a career could offer prestige, relative autonomy, income above average, the opportunities to help others and creative and artistic challenges. His or her work can also influence the choices made in other spheres of life¹.

Most dentists practicing today made their career decision is late high school or early college. Dentists occupy an important position in society as professional health care workers. The opportunity to participate in dental education in many countries, especially in the developing ones, is limited to a small percentage of the community. Also understanding students reasons to join a dental school and their future career goals may help recruiters in designing appropriate and effective recruitment materials. Understanding students reasons may aid recruiters to provide them a complete and accurate picture of the profession. It has also been suggested that having an insight into the motivations of those contemplating dental studies may assist in the evolution of dental curriculum and a better understanding of students reasons for entering the dental profession and may facilitate a fruitful interaction between student and teacher².

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate why students at Gandhi Dental College and Hospital,

Bhubaneswar had chosen Dentistry as their career, to consider the back ground factors that had influenced their decision and to study their different career goals.

Material and Methods

Career aspirations of Dental Students was assessed with the help of a predesigned questionnaire which was distributed among Dental students divided into 5 groups (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th Year undergraduate and interns) at Gandhi Dental College and Hospital Bhubaneswar, India. Approval of the questionnaire and research methodology was received from the college ethics board. Before conducting the main survey a pilot survey was conducted (n=25) where the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained. The questionnaires were collected immediately after completion on the same day.

The study was conducted between 1st February and 15th April 2010. The data was analysed using SPSS software (version 10)

Results

Total sample size was 266. Response rate was 86% (n=230). Data base showing the number of participants, their class wide distribution and their gender is tabulated (Table I)

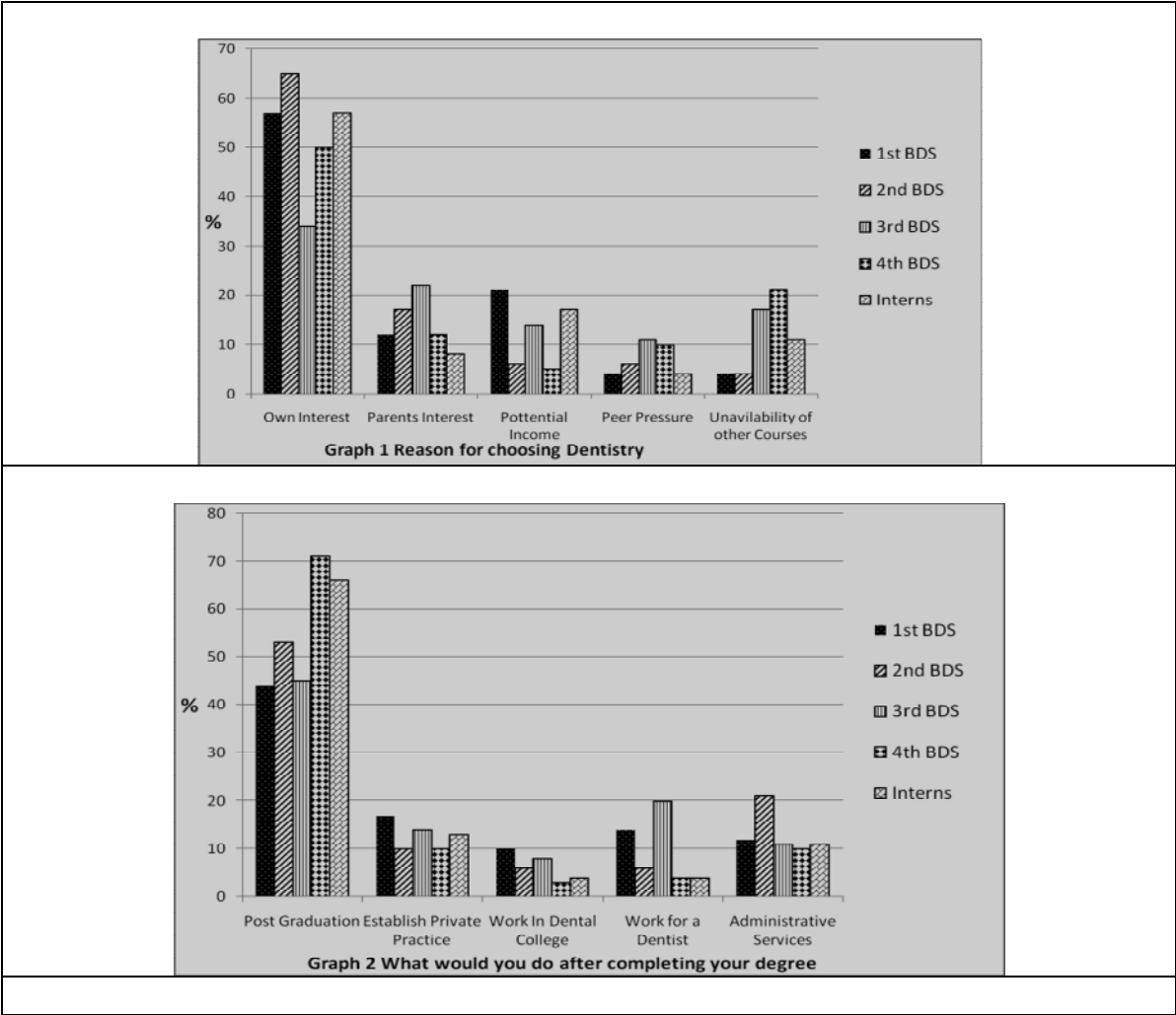
Table 1.Data base showing the number of participants, their class wide distribution and their gender is tabulated

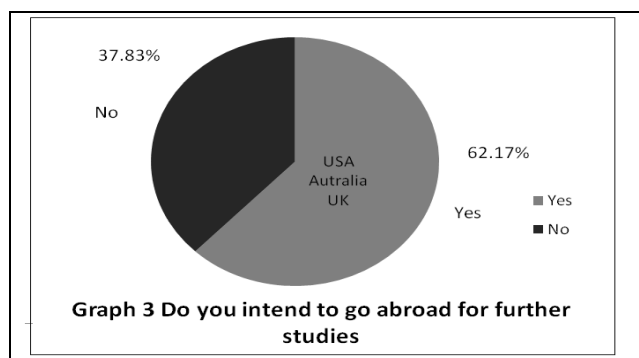
| Groups | Total Students | Participants | | |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------|--------|--------------------|
| | | Male | Female | Total Respon dents |
| 1 st BDS | 47 | 25 | 22 | 47 |
| 2 nd BDS | 57 | 16 | 31 | 47 |
| 3 rd BDS | 47 | 15 | 20 | 35 |
| 4 th BDS | 61 | 25 | 30 | 55 |
| Interns | 54 | 16 | 30 | 46 |
| Total | 266 | 97 | 133 | 230 (86%) |

When the question was asked regarding reasons for choosing Dentistry as a career 53.91% (n=124) had chosen dentistry due to their own interest, while 14.34% (n=33) due to parents interest, 12.61% (n=29) due to potential income, 11.74% (n=27) had chosen dentistry due to unavailability of other desired courses and lastly

7.39% (n=17) due to peer pressure (**Graph-1**) . There was no difference of response between the male and the female students. Peer pressure and unavailability of other desired courses were the least common reasons. 57.39% (132/230) of the under graduates including the interns wanted to study furthers i.e. do their post graduation after completion for better salaries and good job opportunities while the second common choice was administrative services i.e. 13.48% (n=31), followed by private practice i.e. 13.04% (n=30) which is followed by work for a dentist i.e. 9.13% (n=21) and last choice is work in a dental college i.e. 6.52% (n=15) (**Graph-2**). Majority of the students wanted to take up oral surgery as their specially followed by Endodontics which is followed by community dentistry. 62.17% (n=143) wanted to go abroad for further studies commonly to U.S.A. followed by Australia, UK and lastly to New Zealand (**Graph-3**).

When asked whether they would advice their friends to take up Dentistry 81.74% (n=188) said yes mainly because of good scope due to new emerging technologies while 18.26% (n=42) said no, due to factors like increased stress, low salaries and saturation in this field in our country.





Discussion

The rationale of our survey was to find out the career aspirations of Dental students of Gandhi Dental College and Hospital, Bhubaneswar. In our study 53.91% (n=124) students has chosen the profession due to their own interest. This finding was similar to a study conducted in Mysore in 2008³. Unavailability of other desired courses 11.74% (n=27) and peer pressure 7.39 (n=17) were the least common reasons.

In our survey 57.39% (n=132) of the under graduate students wanted to pursue further studies i.e. post graduation and take up teaching or research. Administrative services i.e. 13.48% (n=31) was the 2nd choice and private practice in urban area was the 3rd choice. Also more number of undergraduate students 62.17% (n=143) wanted to go abroad for work and wished for some career counseling in this regard. This may be due to the better financial incentives abroad. 18.26% of students would not advice their friends to take up dentistry due to long study period and low financial returns due to increased competition and more private dentists.

Lack of proper directions in the policies pertaining to education, service, recruitment and placement of Dental surgeons is a notable feature in India. Inspite the large number of Dental graduates coming out each year from Dental College, the countries rural areas remains short of the Dentists. Also numbers of applicants to Dentistry have decreased and dental services are having problems motivating young talented people to the profession.⁴ Personal characteristics and motives of the students play a major role in shaping their career preferences⁵ Career advice should be tailored for students before the beginning of the course since they are attracted to dentistry for slightly different reasons. This can help the dental universities to plan and tailor recruitment techniques to select to most suitable applicants, both professionally and socially, for the ultimate benefit of communities.

A focused and vocational university programme such as dentistry may limit the opportunities for graduates who find that clinical dentistry is not for them. It is important that those advising and recruiting people into the profession should ascertain whether applicants have a realistic idea of what lies ahead⁶. Aim careers advice around three years ahead of leaving school, since this is

when pupils are making decisions about their career options. In additions, a reduction in overall applications to the undergraduate course has been seen during the last decade, although fluctuations have occurred from year to year, so it is essential to keep up momentum in the drive to attract suitable applicants for the course. This can be done by increasing the quality instead of quantity of Dental Education in India, creating more awareness among the public by conducting health programmes and placement of dentists in rural areas improving research and by opening up superspecialisation courses in our field.

CONCLUSION

Finally it is important to consider the limitations of this study. The students participating in this study did not comprise a representative sample but simply a 'convenience sample'. Although their views represent a interesting snap shot of dental students attending Gandhi Dental College. They cannot be taken as representatives of the views of dental students as a whole.

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