



Research Article

PERCEPTION OF DENTAL STUDENTS PURSUING COMPULSORY ROTARY INTERNSHIP ON DENTAL EDUCATION AND FUTURE PROFESSIONAL CAREER IN INDIA- A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

Mohit Bansal¹., Tarun Kalra²., Varun Suri³., Sheetal Sharma⁴ and Tamanna Nanda⁵

^{1,3}Department of Public Health Dentistry Rayat Bahra Dental College & Hospital Mohali (Punjab)

²Department of Prosthodontics Bhojia Dental College & Hospital, Baddi (HP)

^{4,5}Rayat Bahra Dental College & Hospital Mohali (Punjab)

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To investigate the perception of dental students pursuing internship on dental education and future professional career. **Materials and Method:** A cross-sectional study was carried among 408 interns pursuing compulsory rotatory internship in four different private dental colleges in Punjab, India. A self structured close-ended questionnaire was used to record the data which was categorized into personal, social, economical, professional and future plans. Appropriate statistical tests were used to interpret the data. **Results:** Majority of the respondents were females 94.4% than males accounting only 5.6%. 74.1% of the respondents wanted to pursue dentistry as their career, out of which, 67.5% want to settle abroad. 50.9% found dentistry to be interesting. The main factors responsible for a career in dentistry was mainly found to be economical and social based. **Conclusion:** The main reason of dissatisfaction in the field of dentistry is job security, awareness and stability, making a mindset to settle abroad among aspiring dentists. Hence, the policy makers should take necessary steps in this direction so that such obstacles are removed and this cluster of capable and contributing dentists can serve the society, thus improving sectors of health and economy in India.

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INTRODUCTION

Dentistry involves methodical understanding the roles of various disciplines in producing an esthetic makeover with the most conservative and biologically sound interdisciplinary treatment plan. It provides a range of career and business opportunities, with career opportunities as a general practitioner as well as a specialist^{1,2}.

In India, dental education was started with the establishment of Calcutta Dental College and Hospital, first dental college by Dr. Rafiuddin Ahmed in 1924³. With a vision to expand the field of dentistry, private dental colleges came into existence from early 1966. To maintain the standards of dental education a statutory body was constituted on 12th April 1949, under Act of Parliament - the Dentists Act, 1948 (XVI of 1948) named as Dental Council of India (DCI). Currently, there are a total of 51 government and 273 private colleges producing around 25000 dental graduates every year to serve the oral health needs of the growing population⁴.

The dental curriculum is divided into four years plus one year compulsory rotatory internship.

Out of four years, first two years are theoretical based imparting knowledge of human tissues including teeth and other parts and the next two years are based on imparting practical knowledge focused on all the nine specialties of dentistry.

The dentist-population ratio is 1:10,000 in urban areas and 1:20,000 in rural areas which is very less. The rural population consists of around 740 million in which, total workforce is only 55% out of which only 47% are skilled workers. On the other hand, there are around 284 million urban populations consisting of 52 percent workforce having 38% skilled workers³.

The choice of a career is influenced on a number of factors mainly by advice from parents, relatives, teachers, and counselors⁵. Students' motivation for choosing a career in the health professions and assessing the level of satisfaction among dental students provides a key barometer of the future of dental education⁶.

As the data available on the attitudes of dental students in the field of dentistry in India is very less thus, a study is undertaken among dental students pursuing compulsory rotatory internship to investigate the views on dental education

*Corresponding author: Mohit Bansal

Department of Public Health Dentistry Rayat Bahra Dental College & Hospital Mohali (Panjab)

and professional perspectives and to understand their opinions and expectations to make dentistry as a future career.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

A cross sectional study was carried out among 408 dental interns of four different private dental colleges in the state of Punjab enrolled in the academic year 2017-18. All the interns were included in the study. The study protocol was approved by the Ethical Committee of Rayat-Bahra University. A self structured 14 close-ended questionnaire was used to record the data which were further divided into four main categories namely personal, social, economical, professional and future plans after graduation which were asked to be filled by the interns posted in all the nine specialties in the college hours. Content validity of the questionnaire was measured by taking the opinion of experts, and the questionnaire was modified accordingly. The questionnaire was pre-tested and its Cronbach alpha (α) was found out to be 0.87. To maintain confidentiality, the study was conducted in a single-blind manner.

Descriptive analysis was performed by calculating the frequencies, percentages, and mean values. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 (Chicago, Illinois, USA). The Chi square test and Student's t-test was used to find significant responses ($p \leq 0.05$).

RESULTS

A total of 408 dental interns were asked questions regarding the perception of dental education with a minimum age of 21 years and a maximum of 25 years (mean age 22.5 years). The proportion of the females interns were 67.6% (276) than males accounting 32.4% (132).

Response regarding dentistry as a career

In the present study, the respondents were asked a number of questions on dentistry as a profession (Table-1). It was observed that 63% (257) of the respondents got the seat through merit. 20.4% (84) of them wanted to become a dentist. 12% (49) opted for this course under family pressure while only 4.6 % (19) thought that dentistry has a stable future and can open their own business after graduation. Family pressure for opting dental education after higher secondary under management seat was found to be more in females (18.6%) than males (11.6%). The mean gender wise comparison was found to be statistically significant ($p = 0.046$).

Table 1 Showing responses based on the questions asked to the respondents

	Questions asked	Frequency	Percentage	Mean p-value
Personal	I always wanted	83	20.4	0.046*
	Parental background	19	4.6	
	Through PMT	257	63	
Social	Family Pressure	49	12	0.012*
	To create awareness	366	89.8	
Economic	Expertise my skills	260	63.8	<0.002**
	I want to earn money	343	84.2	
Professional	Good and stable future	295	72.2	0.17
	I want to be my own boss	173	42.3	
	Work honestly and improve the overall status	246	60.2	

*Statistically significant; **Highly statistically significant

Perceptions of dental education curriculum

In their responses, 50.9% (207) of the respondents found dentistry to be interesting and offers different challenging hurdles to be crossed. 32.4% (132) thought that dentistry gives a good platform for future growth. 53.7% (219) of the respondents believed that the dental curriculum followed in too long and lengthy and 40.7% (166) found it to be reasonably good, the difference was found to be significant ($p < 0.003$). Almost 52% (212) of the respondents thought that the overall practical training is inadequate.

Perceptions of dentistry and dental education as future professional career

68.5% (279) of the respondents think that the status of dental profession or practicing dentist is average. 74.1% (302) of the respondents want to pursue dentistry as their career. Out of them 67.5% (275) want to settle abroad and the rest 32.5% (133) wanted to settle in India to do masters or set up their own clinic. The reasons found among the respondents who want to go and settle abroad are job placement and handsome income 57.5% (235) followed by better opportunity for studying 28.7% (117) and family already settled abroad 13.7% (56). Among the respondents who want to settle in India, only 34.6% (141) wanted to do masters and the rest want to settle themselves in already running parental dental clinics or wanted to change their fields.

DISCUSSION

The goal of dentistry is to train students to become ethical, skilled professionals capable of practicing dentistry on a level that is consistent with the expectations of society⁷. In the present study the ratio of females is to males was found to be very less. This may be linked to the fact that this profession will serve for their qualification deeds as well as for their matrimonial purposes.

The main guiding force to choose any profession is influenced by parents. The finding of our study is found to be contrary as compared to the studies conducted by Tangade *et al.*⁸, Marino *et al.*⁹ that the parents were very influential among Asian students. However, in our study majority of respondents (63%) who opted for dental course was mainly selected through entrance exam (PMT).

Understanding the factors of career choice is important because that decision makes an obvious impact on the individuals' future life pattern¹⁰. The main factors responsible for a career in dentistry was mainly found to be economical and social based. One can be subjected to a number of options after doing graduation leading to financial security. Dental awareness is still less in India as the people get their treatment done only in emergency and dental treatment is considered to be costly.

In the present study very less number of respondents 42.7% (11) wanted to open their own clinic. This may be attributed to the reason that a hefty investment is required for a private setup. The cost of equipment's and the locality of clinics need sound financial support. Even after such financial constraints the private practice is not easy due to already saturated market and competition³.

Assessing the level of satisfaction among dental students provides a key barometer of the future of dental education in

any country. Professional satisfaction was reported to be of the least priority; this reflects the deep influence monetary factors have on the minds of majority of the individuals⁵.

Social status attached to practicing dentistry played a major role in choosing any field. Qualitative researches support motivation is required in any field and especially the individuals are more attracted by aspects of jobs that they perceive to provide security, flexibility, and quality of life¹¹.

In the present study, it was found that 67.5% of the respondents wanted to settle abroad. This may be due to the fact reason that there is lack of awareness about oral health in Indian public scenario or very low prospects of jobs thus growing dissatisfaction among dental graduates³. Further, going abroad and settling may have monetary benefits and greater scope of professional growth¹².

There could be a number of other factors which influence career decision. The study only includes the perception of a small group of dental students. Thus, a larger group of sample size and other associated factors responsible are required to know the actual status of the students in pursuing dentistry as a career in India.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, dental education in India is increasingly becoming a source of dissatisfaction as there is lack of government jobs, high competition in private practice, costly equipments and, lack of awareness about oral health. Anticipation of stable income and assured job are some important factors which are inclining the Indian dental graduates to opt for settlement in abroad. Therefore, it is required to take necessary steps in this direction; otherwise, it may lead to challenges in the future of dentistry as a high percentage of capable and contributing dentists may leave abroad.

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