

Assessment of Dental Students' Perception of Dentistry as a Career Option

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Abstract

Title: Assessment of dental students' perception of dentistry as a career option.

Aim: To assess the dental students' perceptions of dentistry as a career choice in a dental teaching institute, Karnataka state, India, **Introduction:** Career choice is a complex multifaceted process affecting all aspects of life. It is important to understand students' motives behind choosing a specific career. Hence this study is designed with the aim to evaluate the factors influencing dental students to choose dentistry as a career. **Method:** A cross sectional survey was conducted on 250 dental students of first to final year dental colleges in the city of Mangalore, Karnataka, India. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 11 reasons that possibly influenced the students' decision to study dentistry. The data was analysed using SPSS20 software. **Results:** It was found that 38.7% of I BDS students, 31% of II BDS students, and 61.9% of IV BDS students took up dentistry since they missed a medical seat. About 52.9% of III BDS students chose dentistry since they had an interest/liking for the same.

Keywords: Dentistry, Career, Dental colleges, Curriculum, BDS (bachelor of dental surgery)

Introduction

As a student in today's world, where there are numerous options, the decision of choosing a career is one of the most difficult and challenging decision. Some people have many interests and passions while others have a strong aptitude or natural skill in a subject that applies to a variety of fields. These are positive things, but sometimes having too many choices can make it harder to choose a career. Career choice is a complex multifaceted process affecting all aspects of life. It is important to understand students' motives behind choosing a specific career. Career selection means a process of choosing a profession or occupation which will lead your future professional life. Job satisfaction needs a person's inner need fulfilment. Whatever occupation he/she has chosen, recognition of its work is important.^[1] It varies from person to person and then personal characteristics and motives of the students also

plays a major role in shaping their career performance. ^[2] Many issues may be considered when choosing a career profession even gender and ethnicity may also influence the decision. ^[3]

Dentistry, is the branch of medicine focused on the teeth, gums, and mouth. It consists of the study, diagnosis, prevention, management, and treatment of diseases, disorders, and conditions of the mouth, most commonly focused on dentition (the development and arrangement of teeth) as well as the oral mucosa. Today's modern dentistry involves the complex oro-facial structure like the jaw joint, the oral and surrounding muscles. The scope now stretches also to aesthetic dentistry that itself has an array of possibilities. The new technologies have escalated the science to a new realm of development. ^[4]

In India due to large-scale increase in the number of dental colleges over past 10 years, there has been a marked improvement in the dentist-to-population ratio in general terms. The distribution of dental colleges in India is geographically distorted, with most colleges located in southern and western states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Dentistry in India is currently being challenged to maintain the professionalism. This is partly a result of pressures applied to the educational system. ^[5] Dental students in India are trained to excel theoretically, but there seems to be a disconnect between what is learned and what is applied in the clinics. In the real world, when dealing with patients, problem-solving skills and practical knowledge are necessary. The current status of dental education in India has some serious challenges that will need to be modified. Changing the current attitude of the faculty, students, and the general population towards dental education is another factor important in the successful transformation. ^[6] There are many challenges facing us. They range from teaching learning methods, curriculum innovations, assessment techniques and improving attitudes and communication skills. We need to assess our training program and see if it meets the needs of students and community; to see how it matches to the various dental training programs globally. ^[7] Therefore, this study aims to assess the dental students' perceptions of dentistry as a career choice in a dental teaching institute, Karnataka state, India.

Materials and Method

A cross sectional survey was conducted on 250 dental students of first to final year from dental colleges in the city of Mangalore, Karnataka, India. The data was collected using a structured online survey questionnaire consisting of 11 reasons that possibly influenced the students' decision to study dentistry. The data was analysed using SPSS20 software.

Results

Graph 1: Distribution of study participants according to year of study

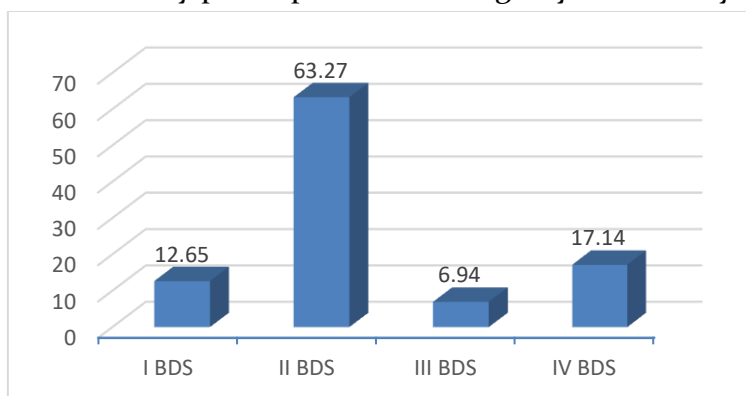
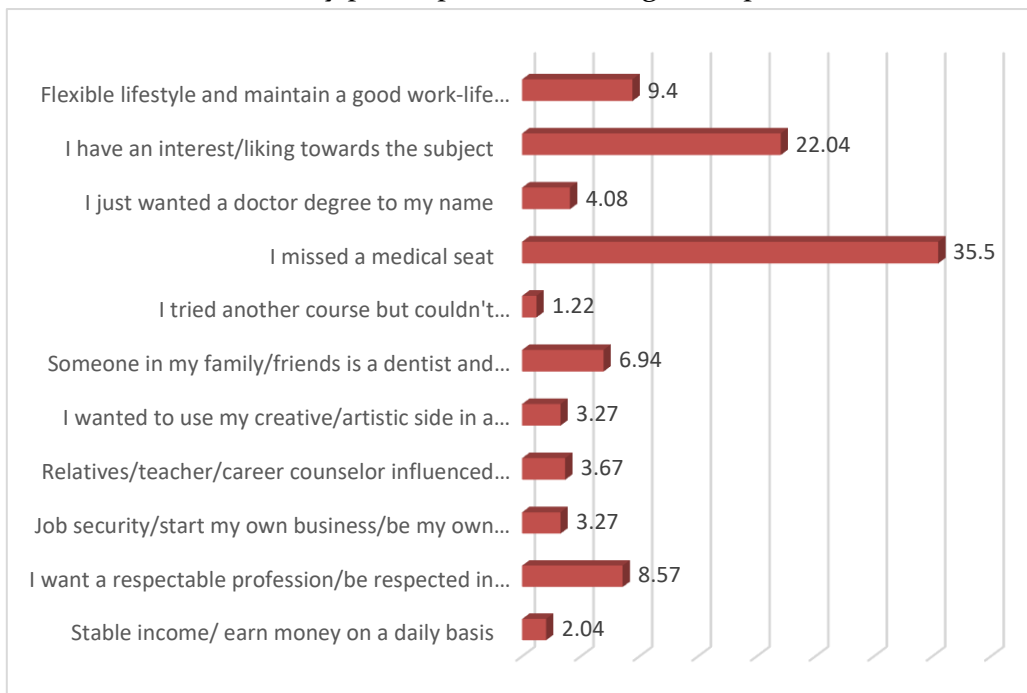


Table 1: Distribution of study participants according to responses

	Number	Percentage
Flexible lifestyle and maintain a good work-life balance	23	9.4
I have an interest/liking towards the subject	54	22.04
I just wanted a doctor degree to my name	10	4.08
I missed a medical seat	87	35.5
I tried another course but couldn't succeed/didn't like it	3	1.22
Someone in my family/friends is a dentist and influenced my choice	17	6.94
I wanted to use my creative/artistic side in a useful way	8	3.27
Relatives/teachers/career counselors influenced my choice	9	3.67
Job security/start my business/be my boss	8	3.27
I want a respectable profession/be respected in society	21	8.57
Stable income/ earn money daily	5	2.04
Total	245	100

It was found that 63.27% of the participants were from II BDS and 17.14% of participants were from IV BDS. (Table 1, Graph 1) In addition, 35.5% of participants chose the profession since they missed their medical seat and 22.04% of participants joined dentistry because they had an interest/liking toward the profession. (Table 2, Graph 2)

Graph 2: Distribution of study participants according to responses



Graph 3: Responses from study participants from different years of study

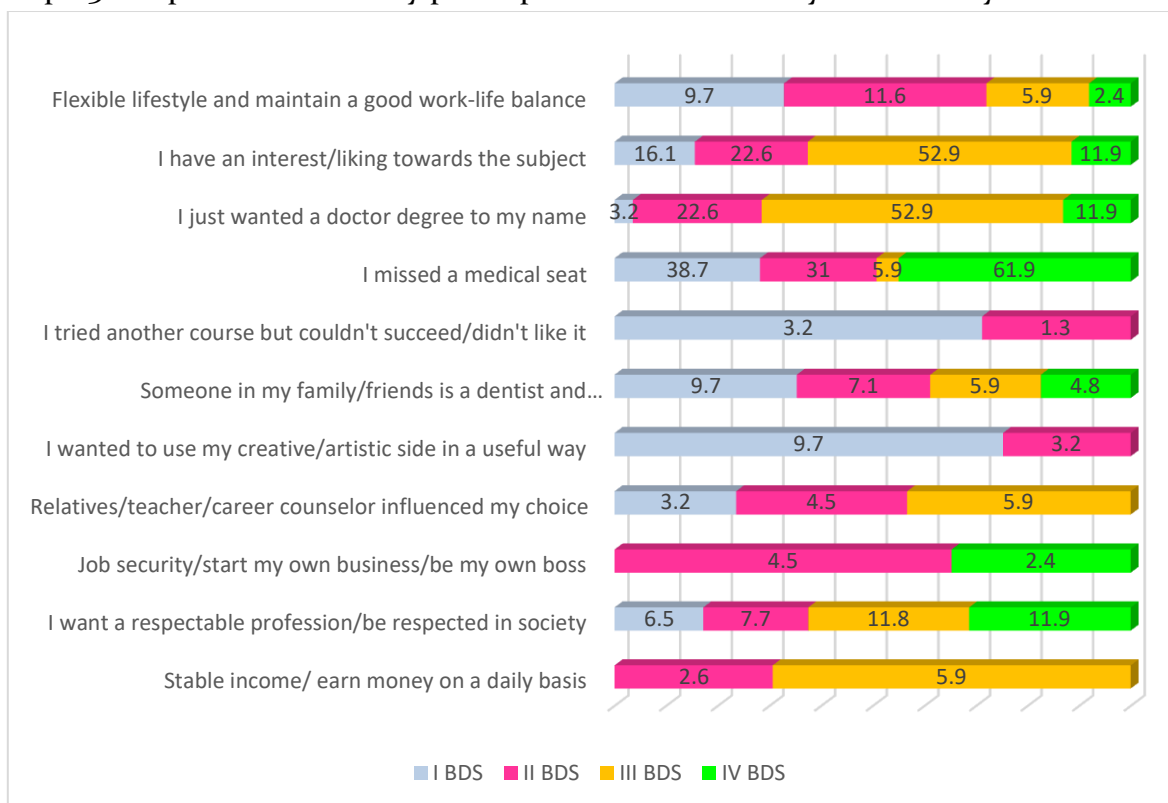


Table 2: Comparison of responses from study participants from different years of study

	Year of Study				Total (N)	P Value
	I BDS N (%)	II BDS N (%)	III BDS N (%)	IV BDS N (%)		
Flexible lifestyle and maintain a good work-life balance	3 (9.7)	18 (11.6)	1 (5.9)	1 (2.4)	23	P = 0.05*
I have an interest/liking towards the subject	5 (16.1)	35 (22.6)	9 (52.9)	5 (11.9)	54	
I just wanted a doctor degree to my name	1 (3.2)	6 (3.9)	1 (5.9)	2 (4.8)	10	
I missed a medical seat	12 (38.7)	48 (31)	1 (5.9)	26 (61.9)	87	
I tried another course but couldn't succeed/didn't like it	1 (3.2)	2 (1.3)	0	0	3	
Someone in my family/friends is a dentist and influenced my choice	3 (9.7)	11 (7.1)	1 (5.9)	2 (4.8)	17	
I wanted to use my creative/artistic side in a useful way	3 (9.7)	5 (3.2)	0	0	8	
Relatives/teachers/career counselors influenced my choice	1 (3.2)	7 (4.5)	1 (5.9)	0	9	
Job security/start my own business/be my own boss	0	7 (4.5)	0	1 (2.4)	8	
I want a respectable profession/be respected in society	2 (6.5)	12 (7.7)	2 (11.8)	5 (11.9)	21	
Stable income/ earn money daily	0	4 (2.6)	1 (5.9)	0	5	
Total	31	155	17	42	245	

N-number; %-percentage; *statistically significant using Chi-square test

I BDS students

It was found that 38.7% of I BDS students chose dentistry since they missed their MBBS seat followed by 16.1% who had an interest/liking for the course. In addition, 9.7% chose dentistry since they wanted a flexible lifestyle and maintain a good work-life balance.

II BDS

It was found that 31% of II BDS students chose dentistry since they missed their MBBS seat followed by 22.6% who had an interest/liking for the course. In addition, 11.6% of students wanted a flexible lifestyle and maintained a good work-life balance.

III BDS

It was found that 52.9% of III BDS students chose dentistry since they had an interest/liking for the same followed by 11.8% who wanted to be in a respectable profession and be respected in society.

IV BDS

It was found that 61.9% of IV BDS students chose dentistry since they missed their MBBS seat followed by 11.9% who had an interest/liking for the course. Also, about 11.9% of students wanted to be in a respectable profession and be respected in society.

Discussion

Dentistry, as a career option in India, offers wide range of job opportunities. Dentists can seek jobs in dental departments in government or private hospitals, dental clinics, and health departments. They can also take up a teaching job in any of the dental institutions spread across the country or make a career in Total 31 155 17 42 245 clinical research and advisory departments of pharmaceutical industry. They can work as consultants in companies dealing with oral care products like toothpaste, mouthwash, and gum care products. They can also seek government jobs in the Civil Hospitals, Armed Forces, Indian Railways, etc., Self-employment is also a very promising avenue; it provides the best financial prospects along with a greater level of independence^[8] This study was conducted on the students of a Dental college from 1st year to IV year in which it assessed the factors influencing the students in choosing this course. The second most common was students with an interest. A number of studies have found that dentistry was not the occupation of choice for most students and that medicine was the general preference. In our study, It was found that majority of the encouraged to choose this profession as they missed a chance at doing medical course. In India, admission into medicine/ dentistry course is highly competitive and requires a high grade on the admission test, which is in multiplechoice format, with emphasis on biology.^[9] In our study, 35.5% of students chose dentistry as a result of failure to acquire the required marks in the entrance exams to secure a medical seat. This may lead to a frustrated professional aggravated by the fact that the choice of career was not made for vocational factors^[10] With this in mind, the individuals may not be a good dentist by profession given that this was not their first choice.

Although the majority of the students didn't choose dentistry out of choice, in this study 22.04% of the students had an inclination towards the subject and chose dentistry out of personal interest. The admission process must be changed such that only the students who have a liking or interest for the subject can get a chance to pursue dentistry as a career as this would lead to a higher probability that the outgoing dental student becomes a good dentist and cares about the subject and his patients wholeheartedly. A flexible lifestyle and the promise of maintaining a good work life balance also influenced 9.4% of the students in this study to choose dentistry. Dentistry may not be as demanding of time and presence as compared to medical but is given the same respect as a medical doctor, which was what influenced 8.57% of the students. Conclusion This study shows that the majority of dental students chose dentistry as a result of not being able to get a medical seat. The second most common reason was that students currently studying dentistry actually had a liking towards the subject and we're inclined to learn more about it. Students must

choose this career out of interest and liking and not because of the fact that they didn't get into medical. The admission process must be changed in order to produce a much more efficient and skilful dentist. The students must be educated at the higher education level about the positives of becoming a dentist and the scope of dentistry.

Conclusion

This study shows that the majority of dental students chose dentistry as a result of not being able to get a medical seat. The second most common reason was that students currently studying dentistry actually had a liking towards the subject and we're inclined to learn more about it. Students must choose this career out of interest and liking and not because of the fact that they didn't get into medical. The admission process must be changed in order to produce a much more efficient and skilful dentist. The students must be educated at the higher education level about the positives of becoming a dentist and the scope of dentistry

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