



# ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

## Dental Science

### CHOOSING DENTISTRY- REASONS AND REFLECTIONS

**KEY WORDS:** dentistry, career, choice, profession, chance

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Dentistry offers many opportunities, challenges, and rewards. It is a rapidly changing and expanding profession. The aim of the present study is to assess the reasons for today's students choosing dentistry as their career. **Materials and methods:** A self administered e – questionnaire study was done among 291 students of Dental Institute in North India. Questionnaire included items like reason for choosing dentistry, motive behind, factors influencing their choice. Data was analyzed using Chi- square test. **Results:** Results showed the top most reason for choosing dentistry was to be addressed like doctors (48.1%). Statistically significant difference was found among males and females choosing dentistry by choice or chance. **Conclusion :** Within the limitation of this study, it can be concluded that motive behind choosing dentistry as a career among the surveyed dental students are mostly professional and personal reasons. They are influenced by other factors like dentist in family, as an alternative to MBBS and self employed work.

#### INTRODUCTION

Choosing a profession has become a very crucial commitment in one's life as it further decides the succeeding prospects. In today's world of work, career is seen as a continuous process of learning and development [1]. Numerous incentives drives one's decision towards a peculiar target involving the biological , psychic , communal and analytic forces that lead to making life changing decisions [2]. Choosing one's career relies on insight of one's own strength, fragility, aspiration and intrigues [2]. The impact of job position touches many aspects of life thus molding it. Making a slip-up in career will not give the contentment and the person will end up with disappointment and incompatible for their career [3].

Students pick medical career as they have fondness for biological knowledge, scientific interests and wish to do better for people [2]. Dentistry is one such profession under medical career. Dentistry is an art of sculpting other's smile and treating the needs of oral cavity as oral cavity is a gateway of general health.

In this context, it is vital to understand the reasons and reflections of choosing dentistry. The insight of present study was to assess the factors influencing the choice of dentistry as a career among the dental students in Dental Institution of North India.

#### METHODOLOGY

The aim of the present descriptive cross-sectional self administered e-questionnaire study is to assess the factors affecting choosing dentistry as a career among students currently studying in Adesh Institute of Dental Sciences & Research (1<sup>st</sup> year to interns).

Students currently pursuing the dental course and who were willing to participate were included in the study whereas uncooperative students were excluded.

A total of approximately 300 dental students are currently pursuing the course in the Institution.

It was a duration based study for 1 month i.e., June 2022.

The data was collected using e-questionnaire (Google form) from all the BDS students currently pursuing dental course in the Institution. The principal investigator visited the students in their respective classes explaining the purpose of the study. The Google form (e- questionnaire) was forwarded to the respective whatsapp groups with the help of class representative & a time frame of 2 weeks was given. A reminder message was put after 2 weeks for filling the form.

The questionnaire consists of 2 parts: The 1<sup>st</sup> part of the questionnaire is socio-demographic characteristics like age, gender, year of study and presence of dentist in family or close relative. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of questionnaire include questions assessing the motive behind choosing dentistry, reason to be in this profession and identifying and prioritizing 3 most important factors influencing their choice. A question assessing the expectation from the dental profession is also included.

The questionnaire was pilot tested on ten students which were not included in final assessment. Modifications were made to remove areas of ambiguity in the final questionnaire. The issue of confidentiality was addressed by not recording the respondent's name, assigning code numbers instead to ensure anonymity. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS statistical package. Both descriptive & inferential statistics were sort using Chi-square test. The level of significance was set as  $p < 0.05$ .

#### RESULTS

Present study had a total sample size of 291 out of which 77.3 % (225) were females whereas only 22.7 % (66) were males.

Majority of the study participants (97.6%) belonged to the age group of 17-25 years.

Distribution of students' year wise showed that 28.9% were final years followed by 24.7% of second year and merely 9.3% were interns.

Around 36.4% participants chose dentistry thinking of its better scope abroad followed by 32% who found it to be a respectful profession. Around 16.2% students expected good money returns after choosing dentistry whereas 15.5% felt it as a form of social service.

Among the study participants 28.2% had a dentist in family or close relation. Almost half (45.4%) students were sensitized towards career options during their schooling.

Nearly half (54.6%) had chosen dentistry by choice and for the rest 45.4% it was by chance.

The main motive behind choosing dentistry were the professional reasons (52.6%) followed by personal reasons (31.3%).

Table 1 analyzes the top 3 reasons to be in dentistry. Participants top most reason was to be addressed as doctors (48.11%) followed by wish to be self-employed after completion of degree (37.46%) and 27.84% chose this profession as there were no more MBBS seats left in counseling sessions. Around 21.99% felt it to be more respectful than B.Sc. or B.Com degree.

Table 2 Gender wise differentiation showed that more males (42.4%) chose dentistry than females (24%) because of a dentist in family/close relation and the difference was found to be statistically significant ( $p=0.003$ ). Statistically significant difference ( $p<0.01$ ) was found among males and females choosing dentistry by choice or chance. No statistical significant difference was seen gender wise for motive behind choosing dentistry ( $p=0.74$ ), expectation from profession ( $p=0.14$ ) and state of happiness after choosing dentistry as career ( $p=0.31$ ).

Table 3 Age wise no statistical difference was seen among groups for variables like close dentist in family ( $p=0.38$ ), career sensitization ( $p=0.89$ ), motive behind choosing dentistry ( $p=0.09$ ) and expectation from profession ( $p=0.94$ ). Only difference was found to be significant for state of happiness in choosing dentistry as a career ( $p=0.006$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In today's world, it is believed that the primary motive behind the choice of career is to satisfy needs as it affects one's life. This decision is influenced by various factors and motives [1]. The purpose was to assess the factors affecting choosing dentistry as a career.

In the present study majority of the study population were females (77.3%). Similar trend was reported in other studies done by Harikiran AG et al [3], Orenuga OO et al [4], Scarbecz MA et al [5] and Gietzelt D et al [6]. It reflects the fact that the number of women entering the dental profession has been growing in recent years. This trend can be attributed to the flexible working hours which help them balance their professional career with the demand of domestic needs [2].

Around 28.2% study population had chosen dentistry because of dentist in family or close relation. Well educated parents reportedly take an active role in individual's career making decision [3]. It seems that surrounding environment and dominant culture play greater role in students' career motivation [7]. Positive family encouragement is important to the progression of the student's academic career.

More than half of the students (54.6%) revealed that dentistry

was their first choice. The result of this survey illustrates that dentistry is a prestigious profession. The result of the present survey shows that main motive behind choosing dentistry is professional. The positive perception associated with the profession of doctors in society may imply prestige, respect and societal status which make it desirable to be called a doctor. That is why the top most reason cited by student in this study is their wish to be addressed as Doctor. Wanting to serve society was also found to be one of the motives for choosing dentistry. Such altruistic motives for joining dentistry have been reported in various studies around the world [3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14].

The expectation of students from the course were mainly better opportunities abroad, respect followed by money and social service. In India, dental job opportunities are scanty and there is no implementation of oral health policy at national level. Many states have no dental services provided under the public health sector. Consequently, job opportunities for undergraduates are solely concentrated in the private sector. This is well understood by dental students thus have not emphasized money as an aspect for joining dentistry [2].

Most of the students (89%) are happy with their current decision and would like to practice. They acknowledge that dentistry as a career requires good hand skills and ability to communicate with the patients. Dentistry as a career provides a wide range of opportunities for students both on a clinical and research fields.

Around 27.84% students in the study stated that they had joined dentistry due to non-availability in the medical stream. The admission into the medical course is highly competitive and requires a higher ranking/grade on the admission test than that required for the dental course [3, 15].

Present study reported that in all probability most individuals do not hold one crucial motive but consider an act on the sum total of reasons and alternatives in decision making process. As with many other events in daily life, the choice of a professional career could be considered a multifactorial decision, in which several motives interact simultaneously. Therefore, all reason for choosing dentistry as a career must be assessed and analyzed together [2, 16].

As it is known that no two individuals are same. What may significantly influence the career choice of one person may have less importance for other. However, while it is difficult to determine the relative potent of these variables, it is of no doubt that there is some form of interaction among them where one modifies the other [1, 17, 18].

Also this is a single centre study with limited sample size. Therefore multicentric exploratory studies can be designed for better understanding.

## CONCLUSION

Indian graduates face unique challenges like difficulty in establishing their dental career which results in poor performance and burnout. Therefore, policy makers, recruiters should explore alternative to retain the status of the profession and to get the best out of those who join the course of dentistry.

**Table 1: Top 3 reasons to be in this profession**

Variables	N=291	%
Own Wish	76	26.12
Parents Wish	68	23.37
No More MBBS Seats	81	27.84
Good Financial Return	44	15.12
Want to be Addressed as Dr.	140	48.11
No Emergencies	32	11.00

No Night Duties	32	11.00
More Time Available for Family	47	16.15
More Respect than BSC or BCOM degree	64	21.99
Family Foundation in Same Family	13	4.47
Want to be Self Employed	109	37.46
Can Practice Even after Bachelors	72	24.74
Don't Know	21	7.22

**Table 2: Comparison according to gender**

Variables	Female		Male		Chi Square	p value
	N	%	N	%		
Dentist in family/close relative	54	24	28	42.4	8.56	0.003*
Was sensitization program towards career options held during schooling?	101	44.9	31	47	0.09	0.77
Dentistry was by						
Chance	116	51.6	16	24.2	15.36	<0.01*
Choice	109	48.4	50	75.8		
Motive behind choosing dentistry						
Economic	12	5.3	5	7.6	1.96	0.74
Professional	118	52.4	35	53		
Vocational	3	1.3	2	3		
Social	21	9.3	4	6.1		
Personal	71	31.6	20	30.3		
Expectation from the profession						
Money	32	14.2	15	22.7	5.54	0.14
Respect	69	30.7	24	36.4		
Social Service	39	17.3	6	9.1		
Better opportunities Abroad	85	37.8	21	31.8		
Are you happy with your decision in choosing dentistry as a career?						
Yes	198	88	61	92.4	1.02	0.31
No	27	12	5	7.6		

\*:statistically significant

**Table 3: Comparison according to age**

Variables	17- 25		>25		Chi Square	p value
	N	%	N	%		
Dentist in family/close relative	79	27.8	3	42.9	0.76	0.38
Was sensitization program towards career options held during schooling?	130	45.8	2	28.6	0.82	0.37
Dentistry was by						
Chance	129	45.4	3	42.9	0.02	0.89
Choice	155	54.6	4	57.1		
Motive behind choosing dentistry						
Economic	17	6	0	0	7.97	0.09
Professional	149	52.5	4	57.1		
Vocational	4	1.4	1	14.3		
Social	24	8.5	1	14.3		
Personal	90	31.7	1	14.3		
Expectation from the profession						
Money	46	16.2	1	14.3	0.41	0.94
Respect	90	31.7	3	42.9		
Social Service	44	15.5	1	14.3		
Better opportunities Abroad	104	36.6	2	28.6		

Are you happy with your decision in choosing dentistry as a career?						
Yes	255	89.8	4	57.1	7.44	0.006*
No	29	10.2	3	42.9		

\*:statistically significant

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