

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Attitude of Final Year Students towards Dental Specialty, Subject Preference and Factors influencing their decision

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To find whether final year dental students want to do post- graduation and factors that governs their decision for specialization.

Method: A cross-sectional survey was carried out on final year dental student with the help of a questionnaire.

Results: The results showed that 40.8% of the students want to specialize in maxilla-facial surgery followed by orthodontics by 12.4%. 37.2% of the students want to specialize for internal satisfaction. 41. 6% student thought doing specialization would be too much time consuming.

Conclusion: It was concluded that orthodontics is the second preference for specialization as subject and the most common reason for specialization was talent in the field. The most discouraging factor was specialization is too much time consuming.

Keywords: Attitude, dental specialty, specialization

INTRODUCTION

Each year hundreds of dental students graduate from dental schools across Pakistan¹. Among general population, dentistry itself was considered as a separate entity. But in recent years, dentistry has grown as a field which offers specialization in further programs, thus preference for specialization has become major concerns among dental graduates^{2,3}.

Specialization preference had been observed to vary from region to region according to cultural norms⁴. A study by American dental education association (ADEA) found that 38.6% of dental school graduate prefer to enroll in dental specialization programs⁵.

As it had been shown by the student either lack of career counseling or inadequate knowledge of the field can be a factor for choosing specialty. So much emphasis has been placed on guidance for specialty preference⁶.

Dental treatment has gained popularity in general population and people are becoming more and more aware about their smile, hence people are interested in getting braces treatment.⁷ So orthodontics has made its space for specialization preference among students. Orthodontics had been the most popular specialty worldwide and is one of the most common programs offered for specialization in a survey conducted from 1995-2004⁸.

According to 26th Asia pacific dental congress, orthodontics was the preferred choice for specialization followed by prosthodontics and implantology.⁹ A study conducted on Saudi dental practitioner's also concluded that the preferred subject for specialization was orthodontics followed by endodontic and operative dentistry¹⁰.

A study conducted in USA found that orthodontics is the most preferred specialty for pursuing as post-graduate training. It also concluded that gender does not play role in determining student preference^{3, 4, 11-14}.

There are the multiple factors that can assess the choice of an undergraduate student in planning whether they are going to pursue the postgraduate studies and which specialty they are going to choose as major subject. These factors as shown by studies include income, status, social interaction, artistic nature, self-satisfaction and personal interest in the field¹⁵⁻²⁰. Even it was shown that regional characteristics influence decision for choosing specialty.^{20, 21-23}

A study by puryer J et al²⁴ also found orthodontics to be one of the most preferred subjects for specialization and it was also concluded that age, parental occupation and ethnicity did not had any influence on students for their specialization preference. To provide better services to community and to make skillful specialist it is important to recognize general trend in dental student about how they perceive orthodontics as a career specialty and what factor can influence on student behavior for specialty preference.

The aim of the study is to find whether undergraduate students have enough knowledge of post graduate specialization and how they perceive orthodontics as their specialization career

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study was conducted after the approval of IRB committee, Multan medical and Dental College Multan No: 0418 after permission from Ethical Committee. The study is a cross-sectional survey using a questionnaire filled in by the undergraduate students, studying at Multan dental college Multan and Nishtar institute of dentistry Multan. The questionnaire was designed using questions regarding their preference for specialization and factors influencing their decision for specialization. A closed-style of questions was used with tick box responses to facilitate student's convenience.

The students were given a lecture over career counseling and informed about the nature of the study.

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Participation was not compulsory. Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS for windows Version 20.0 Chicago Inc. USA

RESULTS

First preference as subject for specialization: The results of our study showed that 40.8% of the participants want to specialize in oral and maxilla-facial surgery followed by orthodontics 12.4%, community dentistry 12%, operative dentistry 9.2%, prosthodontics 7.2%, periodontology by 6.8%, oral pathology by 5.6% and dental material by 3.6% (Table 1).

Table 1: Subject Preference No 1

	Frequency	%	Valid%	Cumulative%
Dental material	9	3.6	3.6	3.6
Orthodontics	31	12.4	12.4	16.0
Prosthodontics	18	7.2	7.2	23.2
Oral medicine	6	2.4	2.4	25.6
Community dentistry	30	12.0	12.0	37.6
Oral surgery	102	40.8	40.8	78.4
Operative dentistry	23	9.2	9.2	87.6
Periodontology	17	6.8	6.8	94.4
Oral pathology	14	5.6	5.6	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Subject Preference No 2

	Frequency	%	Valid%	Cumulative%
Dental material	7	2.8	2.8	2.8
Orthodontics	56	22.4	22.4	25.2
Prosthodontics	11	4.4	4.4	29.6
Oral medicine	12	4.8	4.8	34.4
Community dentistry	8	3.2	3.2	37.6
Oral surgery	53	21.2	21.2	58.8
Operative dentistry	68	27.2	27.2	86.0
Periodontology	26	10.4	10.4	96.4
Oral pathology	9	3.6	3.6	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Factors Affecting Decision

	Frequency	%	Valid%	Cumulative%
Family and friends	25	10.0	10.0	10.0
Talent in field	57	22.8	22.8	32.8
Financial issues	21	8.4	8.4	41.2
Internal satisfaction	93	37.2	37.2	78.4
Recognition	15	6.0	6.0	84.4
Reward	9	3.6	3.6	88.0
Further studying	30	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Discouraging Factor For Specialization

	Frequency	%	Valid%	Cumulative%
Too time consuming	104	41.6	41.6	41.6
Too expensive	37	14.8	14.8	56.4
Too competitive	69	27.6	27.6	84.0
No need	40	16.0	16.0	100.0
Total	250	100.0	100.0	

Second preference as subject for specialization: The student selected second subject for their specialization would be operative dentistry by 27.2%, followed by orthodontics by 22.4%, periodontology 10.4%, oral medicine 4.8, prosthodontics by 4.4%, oral pathology 3.6%,

community dentistry 3.2% and dental material by 2.8% (Table 2).

Reason for choosing specific subject: 37.2% of the students want to specialize because of internal satisfaction. 22.8% of the students want to specialize because they want to gain skill in specific field. 12% wants to specialize because they just want to study further. 10% of the students want to specialize because of recommendation from their families and friends, 8.4% of the students wants specialization for financial issues, 6% of the students wants to specialize for recognition, 3.6% wants to specialize for some reward (Table 3).

Factors discouraging from doing specialization: The factors that might discourage students from specialization would be 41.6% of the students thought it would be too much time consuming. 27.6% of the students thought there is too much competition. 16% of the students thought there is no need for specialization, 14.8% of the students thought it doing specialization is too expensive (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

This study aims to define factors that are most likely going to affect student's decision for post-graduation and factors that can discourage them from post-graduation. It also helps to know subject preference for specialization. This can provide future direction how students should be counseled for post-graduation and should be counseled for post-graduation. For many years, dentistry itself had been considered as a single entity and the dental graduates were thought to deal all type of dental procedure. With advances in dentistry and awareness among population, different programs are offered for specialization. Dental graduates are now pursuing for specialization in different fields. But as new programs being offered for specialization not only in basics and clinical dentistry, the decision for students as to pursue which specialty have created confusion. So this study also aims to find factors that can encourage or discourage any student's decision for subject preference and decision to continue post-graduate studies.

According to Fidele et al²⁵ the motivation for pursuing specialization as career includes financial reasons followed by social status among public. Similarly study by Al-Bitar²⁶ showed that talent in a particular field is the main factor that can influence a student's decision for specialization. A study conducted by Halawany H at Saudi university found that the most encouraging factor for pursuing any specific career can be influence by family and variety of non-clinical duties.²⁷ Gender is also ranked as one of the factor that influence one's decision for specialization with mean of 2.05% with SD of 0.8%. A study conducted in U.K also concluded that the most encouraging factor for specialization was talent in the field by 31.9%²⁴

Our study also showed that the most important factor for specialization was internal satisfaction by 37.2% and talent or skill in the specific field by 22.8%. A study by puryer J²⁴ also concluded that the main discouraging reason for not pursuing specialization is it is too much time consuming 41.1%. a study by kazi et al¹ also find that 40.4 % of students found specialization to be too much time consuming our study also found that 41.6% of the students

thought that pursuing post-graduation is too much time consuming.

Regarding subject preference a study by Halaway et al²⁷ showed restorative dentistry to be most preferred specialty for post-graduation 17.7% followed by endodontic 14.1% and orthodontics by 11.4%. studies by puyer J²⁴ and Gallagher J²⁸ found that the most preferred subject for specialization was restorative dentistry followed by orthodontics. In contrast, the study by Kazi et al¹ found that the first choice of students for specialization was oral and maxilla facial surgery and orthodontics is the second subject preferred for specialization. Our study supports this fact that first choice of subject for specialization was oral surgery followed by orthodontics.

However our study showed the first preference for specialization was oral and maxillofacial surgery by 40.8%. Several factors accounts for choosing oral surgery as first preference for specialization. A study by Marjorie J highlighted some of these factors to be interest in oral surgery either during their undergraduate studies, other feels that this field combines blend of medicine and dentistry both. Some have chosen this field because of some role model in the field, other thinks that by doing specialization in oral surgery they can act as future role mode. Some thought of financial security and improved living standard to be the reason. Those who had not selected oral surgery or who don't wish to pursue for specialization, the reason behind was time containment and inference with their daily life²⁹.

The limitation of our study includes that it was conducted on student mainly at two schools of dentistry in Multan. If it has been conducted on students from other institutes the results might have been different.

CONCLUSION

The results of our study showed that the most preferred subject chosen for specialization was oral and maxilla-facial surgery followed by orthodontics as the second subject as preference for specialization. The main reason for choosing any specific subject was personal interest. The most encouraging factor for doing specialization was internal satisfaction. The most discouraging factor for not pursuing specialization was that it is too much time consuming.

Conflict of interest: Nil

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