

Choice of Dental Specialty and Career Inclination among Dental Students in Karachi, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To evaluate the upcoming choices in dental post-graduation and career inclination among female dental students in Karachi.

Study design: Descriptive cross sectional study.

Place and duration of study: Bhitai Medical & Dental College and Jinnah Medical & Dental College, Karachi from 1st January 2019 to 30th June 2019.

Methodology: A structured questionnaire comprising of 9 questions regarding subject and study was distributed to female dental students. Out of 500 questionnaires distributed, 370 responses were received.

Results: The average age of the participants was 22.07±1.91 years. There were 81.8% females and 18.2% males. Most of the participants were studying in final years i.e. 31.2%. Three hundred and thirty six (91.1%) intended to pursue specialization in their career. 65% of the participants felt that they had sufficient specialty exposure and encouragement from their dental school to be able to decide which career pathway to choose. Talent in the field 32.2%, further studying 19% and financial reasons 15.2% were the commonest factors which were most likely to affect the decision on specialization. Specialization is too expensive 31.7% and too time consuming 35.2% were the reasons where participants thought that they would be discouraged to do specialization. Post-graduation from abroad, job in public sectors and working in private dental practice were responded opinion regarding about future career plan selection.

Conclusion: Most students had an inclination towards oral and maxillofacial pathology, orthodontics and restorative dentistry. The majority of undergraduate students having no intentions to specialize is that they thought it was too time consuming.

Key words: Postgraduate, Dental specialty, Career inclination

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, female inductions in medical and dental colleges have increased. It has been noted that a significant number of female candidates are opting for career in this field.¹ Factors related to choosing a dental profession are very important in terms of determining the prospects of the profession. This profession is given extreme respect and the females are treated with supreme importance in our part of the world. Therefore, females and their respective parents have a compulsion to be associated with this field.² Many studies have shown that the undergraduate BDS students have an inclination towards further studies.³ Due to prevalence in dental health education and awareness among community for the need of dental treatment, there is an influx of dental schools.⁴ However; the opportunities and guidance for post-graduation are scarce in our country. The reasons which influence the career preference among female BDS students include a high status professionally as well as socially, increased and respectable income, being self-employed, flexible working hours, creative work, social welfare and being generally interested in dentistry.⁵

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Bhitai College of Dentistry and informed consent was taken from each participant. A cross sectional study was done as it would demonstrate the objectives of acquiring the information necessary for this study. The target population was female dental students enrolled in dental schools. The survey was conducted in Bhitai Medical & Dental College and Jinnah Medical & Dental College. Based on gathered information, the overall sample size of n = 370 students reflected the total female students from the participating dental schools. The questionnaires were distributed and each student was guaranteed confidentiality. The purpose of the study was given to the participants. This was written on the paper for the introduction of the questionnaire. A responsible student from each of the dental schools was approached and assigned to contact the Correspondence during the study period. A questionnaire was developed after a comprehensive review of literature. The questionnaire was collected immediately after it was completed and the data was compiled using a SPSS software version 22.

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RESULTS

The average age of the participants was 22.07±1.91 years. There were 81.8% female and 18.2% male. Most of the participants were studying in final years i.e. 31.2%. More than 50% of the parent's occupations were same professions. Out of the 369 participants, 336 (91.1%) intended to pursue specialization in their career. 65% of the participants felt that they had sufficient specialty exposure and encouragement from their dental school to be able to decide which career pathway to choose (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic and career responses (n = 369)

Variable	No.	%
Age (years)		
≤ 23	306	82.9
24-26	57	15.4
27-29	4	1.1
≥ 30	2	0.5
Gender		
Male	67	18.2
Female	302	81.8
Years of professional		
1 st year	30	8.1
2 nd year	51	13.8
3 rd year	56	15.2
4 th year	58	15.7
Final year	115	31.2
House Job	59	16
Occupation of parents		
Business	17	4.6
Managerial/Technical	45	12.2
Professional	248	67.2
Skilled Worker	45	12.2
Others	14	3.8
Do you intend to pursue specialist Career		
Yes	336	91.1
No	10	2.7
Don't Know	23	6.2
Do you feel that you have had sufficient specialty exposure and encouragement from your dental school to be able to decide which career pathway to choose		
Yes	240	65
No	129	35

Regarding the selection of first choice of specialty in the future, oral and maxillofacial pathology, orthodontic, respiratory dentistry and endodontic were the most common interests in specialty. Others are also reported in Figure 1. Similarly, responses regarding the second choice of specialty, oral surgery, orthodontic, oral and maxillofacial pathology and endodontic were more popular (Fig. 2). Talent in the field, further studying and financial reasons were the commonest factors which were most likely to affect the decision on specialization. Specialization being too expensive and too time consuming was the reasons where participants thought that they would be discouraged to do specialization. Post-graduation from abroad, job in public sectors and working in private dental practice were responded opinion regarding about future career plan selection as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Responses of candidates regarding the affect, discourage and opinion (n=369)

Variable	No.	%
Which of these factors is most likely to affect your decision on specialization		
Talent in the field	119	32.2
Further studying	70	19
Financial reasons	56	15.2
Family and friends expectations	45	12.2
Lack of existing specialist in field	30	8.1
Social status	27	7.3
Reward	22	6
What might discourage you from specializing?		
Further studying	50	13.6
No need	19	5.1
Too competitive	53	14.4
Too expensive	117	31.7
Too time consuming	130	35.2
What is your opinion regarding your future career plan selection?		
Job in public sectors	88	23.8
Post-graduation from abroad	132	35.8
Private practice	57	15.4
Research project	16	4.3
Working in private dental practice	76	20.6

Fig. 1: First choice of specialty of participants (n=369)

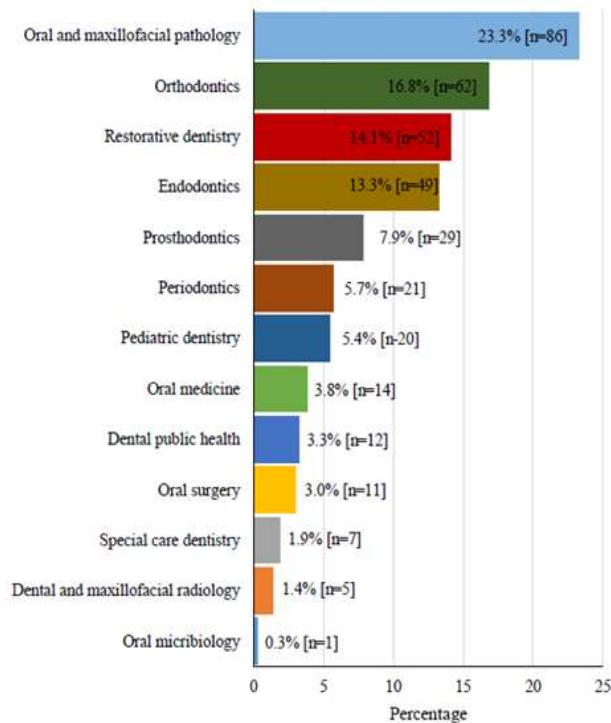
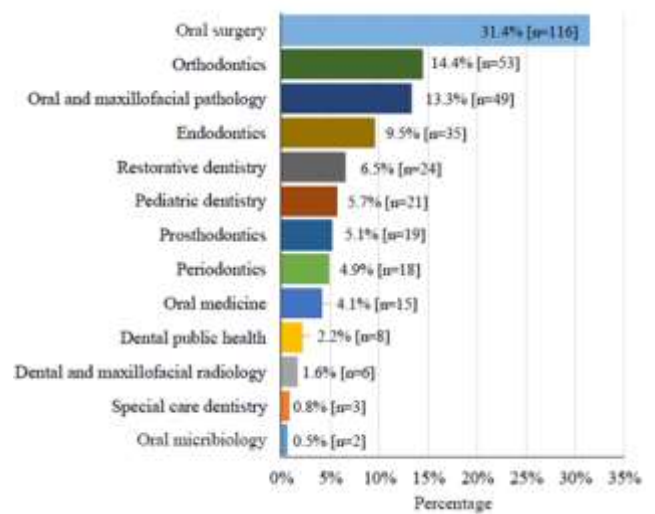


Fig. 2: Response regarding the Second choice of specialty (n=369)



DISCUSSION

The necessity of education, and specifically postgraduate studies, has blossomed over the past few years and has taken the world by storm⁶. The zest for qualification and post-graduation among students has increased worldwide. This is because its importance is now understood, which leads to an inclination towards postgraduate studies⁷. In Pakistan, a huge crowd is now pursuing dentistry. Approximately 2400 students pass out from 45 different dental colleges, of which 810 are enrolled in 13 dental colleges in Karachi⁸.

This study was able to provide a clear understanding of the factors affecting students' selection of advanced education programmes and further studies, the scope of jobs, and the overall importance of postgraduate education. It is one of the most important decisions for dental students as to whether to search for job opportunities soon after graduation, open up a private business, or opt for post-graduation. As our target population included students of all levels, this study helped us to evaluate the reasons for the study preferences among BDS students, their goals for future careers and job designations, and why they thought that postgraduate studies were essential. Most of the participants in the study were final-year BDS students (31.2%) and house officers (16%), as they have proper knowledge and awareness of different subjects in dentistry. Approximately 91.1% of the population confirmed that they wished to pursue studies abroad, which is higher than the 62% reported in a study⁹, which found that 62% of respondents wished to study abroad. This was positive feedback since a study done by James Puyer on dental students in the UK claims that approximately 50% of undergraduates are not sure if they are inclined towards post-graduation or not¹⁰. In another study that was done in Saudi Arabia on 233 dental graduates, it was stated that there was a marked decrease in specialisation during the span of 2005 to 2015. This was observed both nationally and internationally, but career guidance for final years can motivate students for post-graduation¹¹. The students' first choice of specialty was oral and maxillofacial pathology (23.31%), orthodontics (16.8%) and restorative dentistry (14.1%)¹². However, a large percentage of dental students chose oral and maxillofacial surgery as their first choice in a study¹³. Orthodontics, restorative dentistry, and periodontics were their secondary options. These choices seemed to differ in different studies; another study stated that orthodontics was the most preferred specialty while oral surgery was the next. An article published by Lung¹⁴ and a similar study conducted in Ibadan, Nigeria, again opposed the former choice and once again claimed that oral and maxillofacial surgery was the most popular

choice among the students for post-graduation, while prosthetic dentistry was the least favorite¹⁵.

How talented one is in a relevant field signifies that he or she is likely to decide to specialise in a similar field. Around 15.2% of the participants decided that financial constraints were the reason for their decision to specialise. Only about 12.2% and 8.1%, respectively, stated that their choice of specialty would be influenced by family and friends, as well as a lack of existing specialists in the field, in order to have a better chance of advancement in the field. Responses regarding discouragement for specialising stated that 35.2% thought it was too time-consuming, while 31.7% found it to be too expensive. However, fewer students (14.4%) responded that post-graduation was too competitive, and 5.1% had the view that there was completely no need to do post-graduation. Participants' responses to questions about their future career plans revealed that 35.8% planned to work abroad after graduation, while 23.8% planned to work in the public sector. Around 20.6% of the participants claimed that they would like to work in a private dental practice, and 15.4% said that they would work in their own private practice. Only 4.3% of the students wanted to pursue research.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn:

1. This study revealed that most students had an inclination towards Oral and maxillofacial pathology, orthodontics and restorative dentistry.
2. The reason for majority of undergraduate students having no intentions to specialize is that they thought it was too time consuming and expensive.
3. Around one third of the participants wanted to go abroad for post-graduation after graduation while the rest want to practice dentistry without specialization.

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