



# Choosing dentistry as a career: A cross sectional questionnaire survey amongst students at Rama Dental College, Kanpur, India.

Dr. Prateek Singh, Nidhi Shukla, Vaibhav Bansal, Surbhit Singh, Rohma Yusuf

1-5 Rama Dental College Hospital and Research Centre, Rama University, Mandhana, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India  
E-mail: [drprateek@ramauniversity.ac.in](mailto:drprateek@ramauniversity.ac.in)

## ABSTRACT:

**Introduction:** Presently, India is one of the countries with highest number of dentists in the world. Majority of the students would like to pursue a post- graduation degree after completing graduation, and few would be inclined to be employed in the public or private sector.

**Aim:** To assess the motivation and perception for choosing dentistry as a career and the future plans among dental students (under graduates and interns) of Rama Dental College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

**Materials and methods:** A self-administered questionnaire was prepared which consisted of demographic information and questions regarding motivation and perception for choosing dentistry as career and their future plans.

**Results:** A total of 89 students participated in the survey. Out of them 60 were females (67.4%) and 29 were males (32.6%); 47.2% of the participants were final year students and 52.8% of them were interns. 57.3% of participants mentioned that they didn't get MBBS seat, so they chose dentistry. 41.6% of participants felt very good about choosing dentistry and 31.8% of the participants replied they had acquired very good clinical skills during their BDS course and 30% of them mentioned interest towards Endodontics as their subject of choice for post graduation. Around 67% of them showed interest in studying abroad and 38%/ 39% of participants felt USA/UK would be ideal countries for higher studies abroad, respectively. 47% of the participants felt less job opportunities after BDS and 36% of them felt civil service would be a great alternate career.

**Conclusion:** Because of many dental colleges in India, dental graduates are in greater numbers with less job opportunities and has become almost saturated, which has lead to many other alternative career options for the dental graduates.

**Key Words:** Dentistry, Career, Perception, Future Plans,

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## Introduction

India has provided a great market for dentistry, presently it is one of the country with highest number of dentists in the world. Advances in dental research, with opportunities to treat patients, make dentistry an inspiring and enriching profession. It is both demanding and remunerative, thus has the potential to attract new aspirants. It takes years of

dedicated training and expertise to get a bachelor's degree in dentistry. The current situation of Indian dental graduates has a lot of struggle in building up the career. India has 269 institutes offering MDS and 313 offering BDS, producing about 24000 graduates every year<sup>1</sup>. There has been a marked improvement in the dentist-to population ratio in India (1:5000)<sup>2</sup>.

In any students life selecting a career is an



utmost important and an impactful decision. Concern about future career challenges during graduation is a global issue. The increasing number of dental schools in India and a rising number of graduating dentists are few causes of stress. Majority of the students would like to pursue a post-graduation degree after completing graduation, and few would be inclined to be employed in the public or private sector.

With this background, this cross sectional study was aimed to assess the motivation and perception for choosing dentistry as a career among dental students (both undergraduates and interns) of Rama Dental College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

### **Materials and methods**

#### **Study Design, Setting, and Population**

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among dental students including undergraduates (final year and interns) of Rama Dental College, Kanpur, India, in the month of January 2018. The study population consisted of 89 dental students who completely responded to the survey.

#### **Ethical Clearance and Official Permission**

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Ethical Committee.

#### **Motivation for Choosing Dentistry**

On evaluation of the factors which motivated them to choose dentistry, 57.3% of participants mentioned that they didn't get MBBS seat so chose dentistry and 22.5% were interested in the course. On asking how they perceive dentistry as a career 41.6% of participants felt very good and 2.2% of them answered poor. 31.8% of the participants replied they had acquired very good clinical skills during their BDS course and around 4.5% of them had insufficient clinical skills. Around 71.4% of the participants replied that by doing more cases, difficult cases and assisting post graduate students would will help them in improving their clinical skills.

#### **Data collection**

Using an online survey portal (Google Docs) the survey was prepared. The questionnaire was prepared according to few of the key articles [1,3-4] that were selected. Via smart phones, the link was circulated through social media and E-mail among the dental students. The structured questionnaire consisted of 12

items: Demographic questions including education and gender. Questions assessing motivation for choosing dentistry (5 questions). Questions assessing perception and future plans of choosing dentistry as a career (eight questions).

#### **Statistical analysis:**

Data was entered in SPSS software - Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 21.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp). Frequency distribution and percentages were calculated.

#### **Results**

A total of 89 students participated in the survey. Out of them 60 were females (67.4%) and 29 were males (32.6%). When the level of study of the participants was analyzed about 47.2% of the participants were final year students and 52.8% of them were interns.

#### **Future plans**

Seven questions regarding the future plans of the participants were included 5.7% of the participants would be opening their own clinic after BDS course. On asking about MDS course after BDS, 30% of them inclined towards Endodontics and 27% towards Oral Pathology as their subjects of choice (Figure 1). Around 67% of them replied an interest in studying abroad and 38- 39% of participants felt USA/UK would be ideal countries for higher studies abroad respectively. When a question on changing career 47% of the participants felt less job opportunities after BDS would be the reason and 36% of them felt civil service would be a great alternate career.

Question	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	Female
32.6%	67.4%
<b>Level of study</b>	
Interns	Final year
52.8%	47.2%

**Table 1:** Demographic data of the students

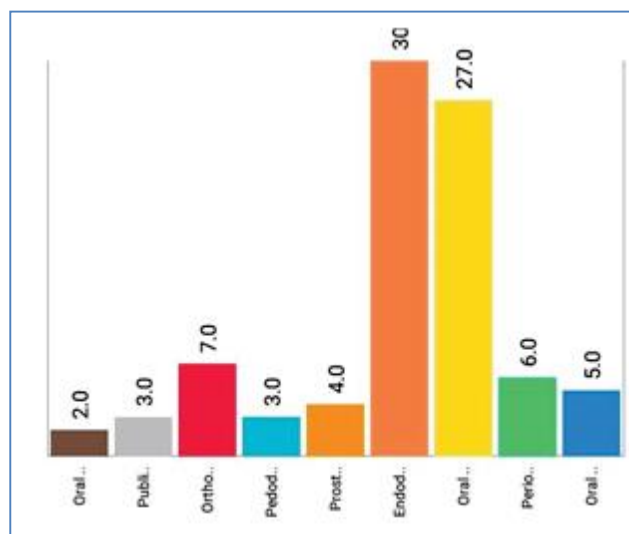
Statement	Options/categories	Freq uency	Percentage
Reason for joining BDS	Interested in the course	20	22.5%
	Forcefully joined	08	09%
	Tried MBBS but got BDS	51	57.3%
	Don't know	10	11.2%
On a scale of 1-5, how do you perceive dentistry as a career?	1- Excellent	17	19.1%
	2- Very good	37	41.6%
	3- Good	32	36%
	4- Poor	02	2.2%
	5- Very poor	01	0.2%
On a scale of 1-5 how confident are you about clinical skills acquired during BDS?	1- Excellent	13	14.5%
	2- Very good	28	31.8%
	3- Good	28	31.8%
	4- Sufficient	15	17%
	5- Insufficient	04	4.5%
If your choice is from 3-5 in the above question, what will help you to improve your confidence levels in clinical skills?	By doing more cases	12	14.3%
	By assisting PG'S during clinical procedure	02	06%
	By handling more difficult cases	03	7.1%
	All of the above	60	71.4%
	others	01	1.2%

**Table 2:** Distribution of participants according to reasons for joining BDS, perceptions, and clinical skills acquired.

Statement	Options/categories	Frequency	percentage
What are your plans after BDS ?	Open own clinic	05	5.7%
	MDS	45	51.1%
	Courses in Aesthetics, Implants, Endodontics	21	27.7%
	Don't know	10	11.4%
	Want to change career	08	9.1%
Reason for choosing the subject for MDS course?	Good career	23	26.4%
	Good Income	17	19.5%
	Like the subject	37	42.5%
	Don't know	10	11.5%
Are you interested in going abroad for MDS/other	Yes	67	76%
	No	21	23.9%

fellowship courses?			
If YES, why would you choose to study abroad?	Low quality of education in India	09	08%
	More job opportunities	39	46.4%
	Personal interest	39	46.4%
	Family/friends influence	02	2.4%
Which country would you choose for further studies?	USA	33	38.4%
	Australia	06	07%
	European	34	39.5%
	Arabian	07	8.1%
	Asian	06	07%
If planning to change career your preference would be?	Civil service	24	36.4%
	Continue family business	12	18.2%
	Army/navy	21	31.8%
		09	13.6%
Reason for change of career	Less job opportunities after BDS	40	47.1%
	Less income	10	14.3%
	Saturated profession	18	25.7%
	Not interested in dentistry	11	12.9%

**Table 3: distribution of participants according to responses to questions about future plans after graduation**



**figure 1: choice of subjects for MDS**

**Discussion**

We aimed to evaluate the perception and future plans of Indian dental students in pursuing their career. Most students were females, which could be attributed to females choosing dentistry as a career in many dental schools in India. It can be attributed to the belief of females being able to effectively balance a personal and professional life, as the dental profession allows for a more [3] flexible working schedule.

In our study 57.3% of students choose dentistry because they didn't get a medical course which is similar to the results found in a study conducted by Anbuselvan et al reported not getting admitted to medicine (MBBS) course as the second most [4] important reason to choose dentistry, Surprisingly the most referred choice of clinical specialty among the students was endodontics followed by oral pathology, Prosthodontics, and orthodontics. This could also be due to the fame and lucrative returns associated with



these clinical specialties which is not reported in many studies. About 46% of students felt more job opportunities as the main reason to visit abroad for higher studies which is similar to the results [5, 6] found by Harikiran et al.

In our study 47% of participants less job opportunities after BDS and 25% felt dentistry is a saturated profession so more than 30% of them had willingness to change their profession either to civil service or continue family business. The reason could be high number of graduates coming out every year which might have created a highly competitive, challenging and saturated dental career.

### Conclusion

Our study concludes that for majority of participants dentistry was not their primary choice but an alternative choice to medicine. Because of many dental colleges in India dental graduates are in greater numbers with less job opportunities and has become almost saturated, which has lead many other alternative career options for the dental graduates.

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