Evaluation of Knowledge and Attitude toward the Career Option after BDS amongst Dental Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: One of the most important decisions one will ever make is choosing a career option. The role of lifelong learning is recognized because of its significance in ensuring professional skills, effective patient care, and career progress. So, the awareness about various career options after Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) plays an important role in achieving professional security.

Materials and methods: The study was conducted among 410 dental students studying in VSPM Dental College and Research Centre, Nagpur. Students from the first year to interns pursuing BDS course were included in the study. A standardized, self-administered questionnaire consisting of eight close-ended multiple-choice questions was distributed, and the received data were analyzed.

Results: The awareness of various other career options after BDS most of them knew was the conventional ones like owning a clinic, do postgraduation, and overseas education. But only few knew about the new options like dental blogging, dental YouTuber, and dental tourism. Also, an average group of participants knew about the career option like government jobs, MBA in hospital management, dental officer armed forces, and entering in teaching profession.

Conclusion: Within the limitations of the study, it can be concluded that most of the participants were unaware of different career options available after BDS. So, there is a need to enhance the knowledge and awareness regarding the different career options available to a general dentist after BDS. This would help broadening the arena of the dental professionals and thereby help flourish the dental fraternity.

Keywords: Career choice, Career option, Dental education, Dental graduates, Future career.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important decisions one will ever make is choosing a career option. The willingness to choose dentistry as a career option provides respect, relative liberation, above average pay, assistant opportunities, and artistic challenges. The work that we do can also influence the choices we make in other spheres of life.¹

Dentist plays an important role in society as a professional healthcare worker.² A small percentage of community take interest in pursuing dental education particularly in developing countries.³ Such situations pose a great challenge on the faculties of dentistry to select suitable applicants for the ultimate benefit of the communities.^{4,5}

Students are attracted to the course while joining graduation course due to social and professional status, increased quality of life and income, recommendations from others, and playing a role in community health services. The dental profession was not found to be the first choice of career. After completing the undergraduation, many students pursue postgraduate admissions. However, the intake capacity of postgraduate seats in dentistry are limited when compared with undergraduate.^{6,7}

Dental and medical courses are difficult, and depression is popular among students of these courses, thereby affecting the students' attitude toward further study.⁸ Thus, the failure rate associated with these fields is high. For most dental graduates today, increasing number of undergraduate seats with decrease in the number of merit seats/higher demand to postgraduate fees remains a challenge.⁸ However, less dental job opportunities in India, increased development of new private dental clinics, and less reorganization of overseas dental qualifications have created intense pressure on dental graduates. There are many options available which are recently available after BDS which most of the

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student are not aware off. Also, renaissance is essential among the attitude of dental policymaker, administrator, and educators to expand the arena of Indian dental profession to boost employment opportunities. So, this study aimed to evaluate the knowledge and attitude toward the career options after BDS among dental students of VSPM Dental College and Research Center, Nagpur.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a descriptive, cross-sectional survey and was carried out to evaluate the awareness of career options after BDS. The study was approved by institutional ethics committee (IEC No. ECR/VSPMDCRC/82/2018) and conducted among undergraduates of our institute. The purpose of this study was explained to the participants, and the confidentiality was ensured. A written informed consent was obtained from all the study participants.

About 410 participants were enrolled for the study. Students from the first year to interns pursuing BDS course were included

in the study. While postgraduates and teaching staff members were excluded from the study. A standardized, self-administered questionnaire consisting of eight close-ended multiple-choice questions were distributed among the participant apart from the demographic data (Table 1). After collecting the data from the students, the statistical analysis was done, and results were obtained by using SPSS Version 16 software, and descriptive statistics were expressed as percentage of responds on selected variables.

RESULTS

A total of 410 questionnaire were distributed, out of which 395 participants filled it giving an overall response rate of 96.3%, whereas 15 participants failed to return the filled questionnaire. Upon asking the reason for choosing BDS as career option, about 72.2% of participants gave the reason of inability to pursue MBBS seat followed by the reason of wanting title doctor before their name (12.7%), whereas 5.8 and 8.9% of participants gave reason of having their own interest and parental/peer pressure, respectively (Table 2). About 83% of participants were of the view that it was necessary to do MDS after BDS (Table 3).

Upon asking the most preferred branch chosen for MDS after their graduation, it was found that about 22% of participants preferred endodontics as a choice for MDS course followed by oral and maxillofacial surgery and prosthodontics with percentage of 16.7 and 16.5%, respectively (Fig. 1).

When participants asked about the reason for doing MDS, 48% participants wanted to go in-depth knowledge of subject, while 41% felt it was necessary for better income and job opportunities, while only 5% felt that it was important for prestige, and remaining 5% felt that they had no option as they have done BDS (Fig. 2).

When questioned regarding the obstacles faced after completion of undergraduation, it was observed that majority of the participants (82.03%) felt that financial insufficiency, slow growth of clinics, and high competition were the reasons for facing difficulty after BDS (Fig. 3).

On enquiring about the awareness of the various career options after BDS, 86% responded affirmatively, while 14% were not aware of the wide variety of career options available post BDS (Fig. 4).

When participants were asked about the awareness of various other career options after BDS, most of them knew the conventional ones like owning a clinic (97.97%), doing postgraduation (93.16%), and overseas education (72.66%). But only few knew about the new options like dental blogging (37.47%), dental YouTuber (27.09%), and dental tourism (17.97%). Also, an average group of participants knew about the career option like government jobs (52.66%), MBA in hospital management (57.22%), dental officer armed forces (54.68%), and entering in teaching profession (56.96%) (Table 4). On further questioning if they want to continue in the field, 77% replied affirmatively and 23% wanted to select option out of this field (Fig. 5).

DISCUSSION

The role of lifelong learning is recognized because of its significance in ensuring professional skills, effective patient care, and career progress.⁹ The present descriptive observational survey was carried out to assess the awareness of various career options after BDS among the dental students. It is very important for emerging dentists to be aware of the different career options available as this

Table 1: Questionnaire

S. no.	Questions
Question 1	Why did you choose BDS?
Question 2	Do you think it is necessary to do MDS?
Question 3	Which branch would you like to opt in MDS?
Question 4	Reason to go for MDS?
Question 5	What do you think about the challenges?
Question 6	Are you aware of the various career options that you can pursue after BDS?
Question 7	Out of the following how many are you aware of?
Question 8	Do you want to continue in the field?

would help minimize the pressure of excellence in clinical practice and saturation in the dental field.

In this study, participants chose BDS as a profession because they are unable to join MBBS. Student take up BDS with the hope that they will lead a life like MBBS practitioner, but they soon realize that these two are very different fields with different challenges. Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions one has to make as it lays down the path of one's life.¹ In this study, most of the student chose BDS because they were not able get MBBS or they wanted title doctor. While in a study conducted by Priya et al.,⁶ 16% of the participants chose dentistry due to its high social status and income. According to a survey conducted by Aeran et al.,¹⁰ 54.90% opted for BDS because they could not secure a seat for MBBS. In a study done by Bhagwani,¹¹ about 60% of participants choose dentistry because of inability to secure MBBS seat and about 28% choose dentistry on their own interest. Gallagher et al.¹² reported that during their undergraduate training and education, dental students felt that their understanding of dentistry has been tempered.

In this study, about 22% preferred branch was conservative and endodontics dentistry. Our result is in accordance with the study done by Shetty et al., where 34.2% students preferred conservative dentistry and endodontics branch.¹³ Also, Datta and Datta⁸ reported that for all years except final year, oral surgery was most popular discipline. No student in the final year was interested to do MDS in oral surgery. For the final year students, the popular disciplines were prosthodontics (45.5%) and conservative dentistry (36.4%). Postgraduate education worldwide has significantly evolved in the past two decades. With increasing globalization and mobility, changing work force demands, advancing technologies, and evolving student expectations, postgraduate programs must adapt and improve to stay on top of current trends in graduate education.¹⁴

In this study, about 93.16% participants wanted to do postgraduation after BDS. In a study conducted by Garla¹⁵ in 2011, 57.39% of undergraduates and interns aspired to do postgraduation education to achieve better wages and job prospects. Also, 79.1% of people wanted to pursue postgraduation as reported by Aggarwal et al.¹⁶ Comparatively, the proportion of people who wish to pursue postgraduation in India is less when compared with other countries probably due to less number of seats with heavy competition and higher course fee.⁶

Table 2: Question 1—Why did you choose BDS?

			Responses				Total
			On your own interest	Inability to get MBBS seat	Parental/peer pressure	Want title doctor before your name	
Year	I	Count	2	66	4	11	83
		% within year	2.4	79.5	4.8	13.3	100.0
	II	Count	2	46	5	5	58
		% within year	3.4	79.3	8.6	8.6	100.0
	III	Count	7	59	9	11	86
		% within year	8.1	68.6	10.5	12.8	100.0
	IV	Count	8	55	13	7	83
		% within year	9.6	66.3	15.7	8.4	100.0
N		Count	4	61	4	16	85
		% within year	4.7	71.8	4.7	18.8	100.0
Total	Count	23	287	35	50	395	
	% within year	5.8	72.7	8.9	12.7	100.0	

Table 3: Question 2—Is it necessary to do MDS?

			Responses		Total
			Yes	No	
Year	I	Count	69	14	83
		% within year	83.1	16.9	100.0
	II	Count	49	9	58
		% within year	84.5	15.5	100.0
	III	Count	75	11	86
		% within year	87.2	12.8	100.0
	IV	Count	75	8	83
		% within year	90.4	9.6	100.0
N		Count	60	25	85
		% within year	70.6	29.4	100.0
Total	Count	328	67	395	
	% within year	83.0	17.0	100.0

Fig. 1: Question 3—The most preferred subject chosen by all the students for postgraduation

Fig. 2: Question 4—Reason to go for MDS

Fig. 3: Question 5—Challenges faced after completion of undergraduation

Fig. 4: Question 6—Aware of the various career options after BDS

Table 4: Question 7—Awareness about the various career option available after BDS

Responses	n	%
Own clinical practice	387	97.97
Do postgraduation	368	93.16
Overseas education	287	72.66
Work in private clinic	219	55.44
Government jobs	208	52.66
Teaching	225	56.96
Work with the armed forces	216	54.68
MBA	226	57.22
UPSC/MPSC	196	49.62
Dental material trader	162	41.01
Dental blogger	148	37.47
Dental YouTuber	107	27.09
Dental tourism	71	17.97

In this study, 72.6% participants wanted to study or work overseas after their BDS. Also, Aggarwal et al.¹⁶ reported that 30.1% of the students wanted to go abroad in the future because of better opportunities of study, 16% for better income, and 8.4% because of family abroad. In the study by Karibe et al.,¹⁷ 35.5% of students in Canada and 44.2% in Thailand preferred working abroad; reasons reported were participation in a specific postgraduate program at an overseas university or hospital, working as a researcher in an overseas laboratory, working at a clinic or managing their own clinic after obtaining an overseas dental license, and international volunteer activity.

A large proportion of dental students are suffering from enormous stress. The student should love the study and the course to cope with the enormous stress involved in studying tough course like BDS.¹⁸ Participants did not prefer working in a government setup but reported a preference for pursuing a private practice, probably because of heavy work load and poor pay in former setup. Some of them, due to flexible working hours, were also inclined to start their own clinics as part of their future plans. But very few students knew about the other professional options like dental blogger, dental YouTuber, dental tourism which are also very popular and earning option.

Fig. 5: Question 8—Questioning if they want to continue in the field

Internet technology is changing the way clinical information is available to dental practitioners. Dental professionals rely, at least in part, on online resources to seek information relevant to their

practice needs. Nowadays, the adoption of interactive social media, such as blogs and discussion boards and YouTube, has been shifting the way clinical professionals acquire and interact with relevant practice information.

Blogs and podcasts are forms of media, accessible to anyone, that provide a vehicle for extended discussion of a topic, which would be required to convey useful information about advances in dental research to practising dentists. Also, since 2011, YouTube, as a social media and network, has gained its popularity and has become one of the most daily visited websites on the Internet. To such an extent that young people think it is as important as television. Sharing our evaluating tool with YouTubers could allow them to improve the quality of their oral health-related videos and thus could be a real progress in terms of oral prevention and public health for the population before, during, and after treatment.

Students' attitude toward future careers varied widely depending on the students age and year of study.⁸ These attitudes of the dental students in their careers and further study varied widely. Often student do not find the right way to choose their future plan without proper career guidance. Proper career guidance is needed in this scenario as dentists hold one of the society prestigious positions and are also an important resource for society. Some of the limitations of this study are as follows: it was an observational study with less sample size; questionnaire was distributed only among the study participant; and on the basis of their awareness, informative workshops and lecture have not been arranged.

CONCLUSION

Within the limitations of this study, it can be concluded that most of the participants were unaware of different options available after BDS. So, there is a need to enhance the knowledge and awareness regarding the different career options available to a general dentist after BDS. This would help broadening the arena of the dental professionals and thereby help flourish the dental fraternity.

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