

Factors Contributing to Selecting a Postgraduate Dental Career in King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah City, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract Objective: to study the motivation of dental students to postgraduate dental education programs and the factors that might contribute to it. Materials and methods: a questionnaire survey were distributed among male and female dental students at their internship training year that were directed toward the general preference of postgraduate specialty training and their career preference. Variable factors were included such as gender, residential area, parents' education, and the type of program. The data were collected, extracted, tabulated, and analyzed. Results: A total of 115 students responded. Statistical analysis was conducted using the SPSS program and looking at Pearson's correlation and logistics regressions for results. It was found that females represented 59% of the group (males, 41%). Most of the students are turning toward clinical based specialties (79.2%) over the research based ones (1.7%) and the difference was statistically significant ($P < 0.01$). The percentage of students whom did not decide yet about the postgraduate path was 19%. ($P = 0.019$), and most of them were actually females. Parental education was found to be a non-significant factor toward choosing a career path while accepting a job at a rural area was found to be rejected by most of the applicant, however females were the most (Pearson's correlation=0.3, $P = 0.019$). Job preference was turning the most toward academic university setting 44% ($P = 0.011$), while 41% selected working at other governmental hospitals and the private practice scored significantly the least of interest (15%). Conclusion: Clinical based programs, working at academic universities, and in main cities were the summary of the preferences. Students were turning away from research programs, working at rural areas, or a solo private practice. Variables did not show a significant power that affects choices and hence the urgent need of undergraduate orientation programs and optimizing the working environments in other sectors to support the distribution of the manpower toward different career paths in Saudi.

Keywords: dental students, undergraduate, preference, specialty, postgraduate, education, career

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1. Introduction

During the long path of undergraduate dental education, the students are being exposed to different specialties in the field. That includes clinical as well research-oriented type of specialties. The glamour of clinical programs has been known to have high popularity when it comes to choosing a future career among students. More factors that might contribute to choosing a postgraduate path are the personal interest, exciting topics, kind tutors, expectation of lucrative earning, and the general popularity of the field [1,2].

The clinical specialty includes and not limited to, restorative dentistry, prosthodontics, orthodontics, periodontics, radiology, endodontics, pedodontics, and oral maxillofacial surgery. While research based practice involves subjects such as oral biology, histology, anatomy, pathology, materials, and public health.

There are two main pillars to fulfill the advancement in dental health care service, understanding the need in the market and the evaluation of the graduating manpower. Few previous studies that took place during the last ten years in Saudi Arabia had shown that marriage status, personal preference, and the social life style do contribute as well to the selection criteria. [2,3]

In our study, we are aiming to evaluate the status of the motivation and the preferences to postgraduate careers among the graduate-year students in one of the largest universities in Saudi Arabia and for the first time, The Faculty of Dentistry at King Abdulaziz University (KAUFD).

2. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted at the faculty of dentistry health care center (King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah,

Saudi Arabia), throughout 2016 to 2018. After getting the administrative ethical approvals, from the research unit and the internship training program committee at the faculty, an electronic questionnaire was conducted asking about the postgraduate career preference, working in rural areas, preferred working environments, and linking those elements to variables such gender, parental education, and the previous living experience in rural sites.

3. Results

The results were analyzed via the statistical software SPSS, using Pearson’s test for correlation, and the logistic regressions. All the results were tabulated and collected to study the incidence, confounding factors, and correlations. A total of 115 students responded that showed females representing 59% of the group while males were representing 41%. Most of the students is turning toward clinical based specialties (79.2%) over research based (1.7%) and the difference was statistically significant ($P < 0.01$). The percentage of the students whom did not decide yet about the postgraduate path was 19% ($P = 0.019$), and most of them were actually females. (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1. Indicating the percentage of each specialty with consideration toward the basic science and the group whom did not decide yet

	Male %	Female %	T %
General Practice (gp)	6.4	2.9	4.3
Basic Sci	2.1	1.5	1.7
Advanced general dent (agd)	14.9	2.9	7.8
resto	8.5	16.2	13
perio	6.4	2.9	4.3
endo	10.6	8.8	9.6
pedo	19.1	7.4	12.2
ortho	8.5	13.2	11.3
prosth	10.6	10.3	10.4
omfs	8.5	4.4	6.1
did not	4.3	29.4	19.1

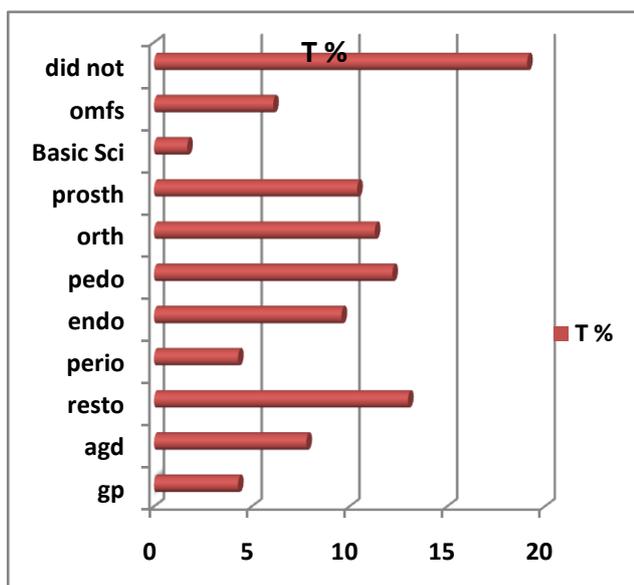


Figure 1. Indicating the high percentage of students whom did not decide yet about the future career in comparison to other specialties

Parental education was found to be a non-significant factor toward choosing a career path. In spite of 60-70% of the parents achieved higher degree diplomas. (Table 2, Figure 2)

Table 2. The preference of working environment, showing more toward an academic one while private practice scored the least

Career Line	%
Academic Uni Hospital	44.35
Other Government Hospital	40.87
Private	14.78

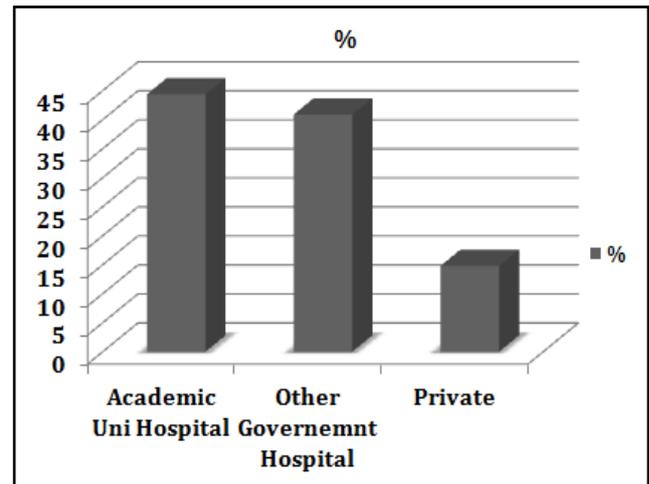


Figure 2. The preference of working environment

Accepting a job in a rural area was rejected by most of the applicants, however females were the most (Pearson’s correlation=0.3, $P = 0.019$, $P < 0.01$).

Job preference was turning the most toward academic university setting, (44%, $P=0.011$), while 41% selected working at other governmental hospitals. Private solo practice scored the least of interest (15%), which might be due to the lack of job security. (Table 3, Figure 3)

Table 3. The table indicates the parental education percentages that showed no significant difference as a factor toward selecting PGDE

Parental education	Low %	High %
Father's Education	28.7	71.3
Mother's Education	39.1	60.9

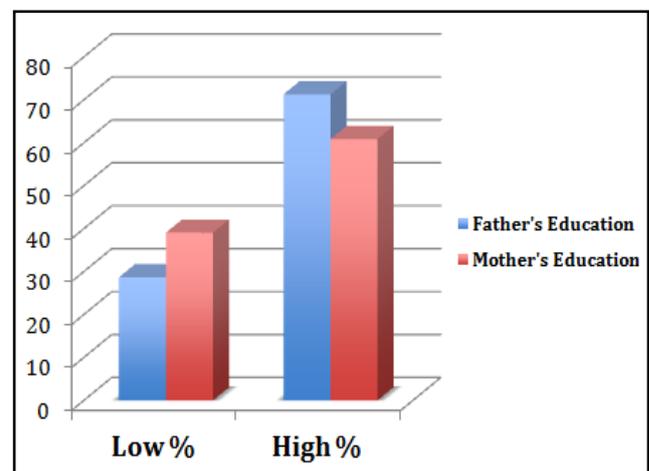


Figure 3. Parental education scores

4. Discussion

The health care sector has high demands in all varieties of dental specialties. The demand might vary between big cities and the smaller type of cities. It is not uncommon that graduates will prefer going to larger main cities to live and practice. Popularity, lucrative income, future development, social life, and other factors do contribute to such call [1,2,3]. In our study that was conducted at one of the biggest and popular cities in Saudi Arabia as it resides on the Red Sea western cost of the Kingdom, Jeddah city. It is not surprising that students are not planning to leave the area. Especially that no clear exciting chances can be offered at other rural sites. Residential compounds, payroll bonuses, special elementary private schools, and comfortable commuting routs, might be areas of interest to get junior graduates to work at rural cities over the main ones.

It is understandable that clinical specialties are more popular in the community in general and among dental students specifically. The media plays a major role in such drive with significant avoidance of the importance of the research-based programs. It is clear that the popularity and the anticipated higher income of clinical practice do play a main role in such selection, however, it is really clear that neglecting the research necessity and the bonus incomes are factors of avoiding them as well [3,4]. In spite of understanding the main advantage of research practice, which is providing more flexible working hours, dealing with data, avoiding public confrontations, and the higher capability of publications.

It was interesting that most of the graduates are aiming more toward an academic university type of work as it might be due to the attachment toward the school that took place through the last 6-7 years. On the other hand, it might be a more appealing working environment and less repulsive than other sectors. In our study we looked at the governmental hospital, and surprisingly was not found to be appealing. The monotony type of work, and less capability of research and work variability might repulse graduates from the governmental hospitals if not to join them at the beginning of the career then probably to leave the sector later on in life [5]. The flexibility can be even more when it comes to private practice, not to mention the chance of higher income. However, it was found to be the least selected and might be due to the job security in addition to the lack of apprehension toward private jobs [5].

Among all the variables that were looked at, it was clear that orientation or counseling programs are definitely needed to clarify the facts onto all the options, as it was described in another study that took place in Makka city [5,6]. Further recommendation to include such programs among the undergraduate dental teaching program especially at the last year of education might reduce the indecision about the career choice [7,8,9]. Such indecisions scored up to 50% in other younger dental school in Saudi while it scored about 19% at KAUFU, and was found to be 13% at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine [5,6,10]. It was proven that such counseling programs can be very effective in reducing such percentages especially that scored a satisfaction rate of 92% among those whom participated in such counselling experience [5,6].

The "Money factor" was a prime factor to consider for dental school education in a study conducted in USA [11]. And that shows a similar motivational drive in different nations, which makes a total sense when it comes to making a living. That was clearly indicated at a survey that took place at the 26th Asia Pacific Dental Congress, that 96% of the participant showed that orthodontics, prosthodontics, and oral implantology were among the most popular specialties, respectively [12].

Our study disclosed that factors as parental education, previous living in rural cities, neither gender, were factors affecting the choice. In spite of the presence of a study in India with more than 400 participants revealed that parents did make an active factor in selecting dentistry as a career line, on the other hand 44% disclosed that they elected dentistry as that they can chose their own working hours while 35% disclosed that they can be their own bosses [13]. It is believed that those factors can be guided favorably toward all the dental specialties in the field of practice and research.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Career orientation or counseling programs should be integrated into the dental educational programs in order to prepare undergraduate students toward the job market and favorably to variably chose their career lines. In order to support the project of research-based specialties, those specialties should have more support in the governmental hospitals even if collaboration took a larger step with the academic institutions. It is important to disclose that governmental hospital environment might require some re-evaluation as it did not show to be an appealing area to practice to graduates and the only reason to apply their over solo private practice is the job security.

In order to support the practicing of dental career at rural cities, motivational factors are needed such as special living residential compounds, special payroll bonuses, and family oriented living areas to support the inhabitant.

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Conflict of Interest

The author would like to declare that no conflict of interest exists in our study.

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