

Motivations to Choose Dentistry among Dental Students of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in 2013

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: One of the most important decisions in an individual's life is to choose the field of study. Then, lots of money and time are spent in order to gain required skills and competencies of the job. According to previous studies, job changing is rarely possible for dentists which is due to the importance of field choice. The present study aimed at determining motivations to choose dentistry field among dental students of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in 2013. **Methods:** In this cross-sectional descriptive study, 245 questionnaires were distributed among all dental students of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences and finally 200 questionnaires (81%) were returned. The questionnaire was made by the researcher and its reliability and validity were proved. Data was analyzed using descriptive and analytical statistical methods and SPSS. **Results:** The students referred to appropriate occupational opportunity and social position as the most important reasons to choose the field while possible abroad job opportunities had the least effect in this regard. Income among males, family advice and serving society among females were the most important factors. **Conclusion:** Students reported social respect, occupational independency and serving society as the most important motivational factors to choose the field. Providing correct information, the opportunity can be used to promote dentists position in society and improve public attitude toward this field.

Introduction

One of the most important decisions in an individual's life is to choose field of study. Then, lots of money and time are spent in order to gain required skills and competencies of the job.¹⁻⁴ Additionally, evaluating the previous studies demonstrates that job changing is rarely possible for dentists. It refers to the importance of more carefulness and information in choosing field.^{1,5} Although students spent lots of money, time, and endeavor to their filed, ever-increasing number of students changing their field are seen in countries like America. The problem indicates the lack of information about field of study or unsuccessfulness of students in their desired field.^{4,5} It has challenged researches to evaluate factors affecting study choice especially dentistry. The studies demonstrate that students choose the field based on different reasons including income, serving society, social position, occupational opportunity, social respect, advice of family, friends, and teachers, handwork, and having independent office.^{1,10} In their study on dental freshmen of Shahid Beheshti and Tehran universities, Ravaghi et al (2002) introduced social position and serving society as the most and handwork as the least important motivations to choose dentistry. Comparing two genders, it was made clear that income for male students was more

important than the female ones. They mostly relied on family advice in their study choice.⁵ Hashemipour studied freshmen and sophomores of Kerman University (2005) and suggested that communication with people, and then, serving society and social position were the most important motivations in this regard.⁴ Comparing medical and dental students in Britain (2003) indicated that students were motivated to study medicine because of serving society and interest in medical knowledge while dental students selected the field considering appropriate income level and social position.⁷ In Peru (2006), male students introduced independency and possibility of adjusting working hours while the female ones referred to serving society and communicating with people as the most important motivations to choose dentistry.³ According to Japanese students (2008), family advice and serving society were regarded as the most important motivational factors to choose the occupation.⁶ Results of a long-term study indicated the role of social respect in choosing dentistry.⁴ Being informed of motivations affecting study choice is regarded as most essential approach to prevent changing the field and wasting of time and money. On the other hand, improving quality of services provided for the patients especially in dentistry is the most important requirement

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of people and authorities of health services. Therefore, the present study aimed at determining motivations to choose dentistry among dental students of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in 2013 in order to play an effective role in appropriate planning and improving dentistry services quality through recognizing motivational factors and promoting information level of students as candidates to enter university.

Materials and methods

This cross-sectional descriptive study evaluated students studying at dentistry field of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in 2013. Enumeration technique was used as the sampling method and the data was collected through distribution of 245 questionnaires among all dental students studying at Dentistry School of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. Finally, 200 questionnaires (81%) were returned. According to different studies and references, items of the questionnaire were discussed in several focus group discussion and finally our questionnaire was developed in 12 groups.^{4,5} Once content validity of the questionnaire was approved by the related specialists, the students were provided with it. Alpha Cronbach coefficient (0.71) was used to evaluate reliability of the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods (frequency-percentage, mean, and standard deviation), Chi-square test, and SPSS16. In this study, $P < 0.05$ was regarded statistically meaningful.

Results

Mean age of the students participated in the study was 22.2 ± 5.41 years. The study was respectively consisted of 49% and 51% male and female students. In this study, 36 (18%), 39 (19.5%), 36 (18%), 24 (12%) of the students were freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior and 33 (16.5%) and 32 (16%) of them were regarded as 5th and 6th students respectively. According to Table 1, appropriate occupational opportunity and social position were the most important reasons in selecting the field while possible

abroad job opportunities had the least effect in this regard. Income and serving society were introduced as the 5th and 7th factors affecting students study choice. Statistically, comparing male and female students considering their motivations to study dentistry indicated income as the most important factor among male ($P < 0.01$) and family advice and serving society among females ($P < 0.01$) students (Table 2).

Discussion

Students participated in this study introduced appropriate occupational opportunity and social position as the main reasons to choose dentistry. In their study conducted at University of Tehran in 2011, Baharvand et al referred to social position as the most important factor affecting their choice.¹¹ Different studies conducted within recent years demonstrated that there were several motivational factors to choose dentistry including serving society, social respect, appropriate income, family advice, occupational independency, and etc.^{1,10} For instance, two Indian¹⁰ and Nigerian⁸ studies (2011, 2006) introduced students' interest to continue the occupation abroad and income as the most important motivational factors to choose dentistry as their occupation, respectively. The difference in motivations to choose the field depended on cultural and economical content of every region and when the research was conducted. However, social position has been generally introduced as such an important factor to choose dentistry that studies conducted within the last three years referred to this factor as one of three first factors in choosing dentistry.^{1,4,5,8,11,12} It may confirm Gerbert's study approving that dentistry, whether per se or in comparison with other fields, is of high social respect.⁹ Wells & Winter demonstrated that social respect was the most important factor considering occupational satisfaction of dentists.¹³ As mentioned, 82% of the students participated in this study introduced appropriate occupational opportunity as the main reason to choose dentistry. Accordingly, income is regarded as the fourth important factor following social respect and having independent office. It indicates less

Table 1. Frequency distributions of the students' responses participated in the study on motivations to choose dentistry field

Serial	Factors	High (>75%)	Moderate (50-74.99%)	Low (<50%)
1	Occupational opportunity	82	16.5	1.5
2	Social position	72.2	42.2	3.5
3	Independent office	58.8	26.6	14.6
4	Income	57.8	37.2	5
5	Family advice	56	26.5	17.5
6	Serving society	48.2	38.7	13.1
7	Handwork	43.7	32.7	23.6
8	Friends advice	36.9	28.8	43.3
9	Possibility of working as an academic member	33.2	32.7	34.2
10	High probability of studying abroad	31.7	27.1	42.2
11	Teachers advice	26.9	30.8	24.4
12	Probability of working abroad	26.8	28.6	45.6

Table 2. Frequency distributions of students' responses participated in the study on motivations to choose dentistry field based on their gender

Serial	Factors	High (>75%)		Moderate (50-74.99%)		Low (<50%)	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Occupational opportunity	84.7	79.4	13.3	19.6	2	1
2	Social position	74.2	70.3	23.7	24.8	2.1	5
3	Independent office	56.1	61.4	29.6	23.8	14.3	14.9
4	Income	71.4	44.6	26.5	47.5	2	7.9
5	Family advice	43.9	67.6	31.6	21.6	24.5	10.8
6	Serving society	50	46.5	30.6	46.5	19.4	6.9
7	Handwork	44.9	42.6	31.6	33.7	23.5	23.8
8	Friends advice	29.6	44	30.6	27	39.8	29
9	Possibility of working as an academic member	32	34.3	32	33.3	36.1	32.3
10	High probability of studying abroad	30.9	32.4	21.6	32.4	47.4	35.3
11	Teachers advice	20.4	33	31.6	30	48	37
12	Probability of working abroad	21.9	30	25	32	53.1	38

importance to income aspect of the field. Instead of paying attention to income of dentistry, students are looking for appropriate occupational-social position and occupational independency. In the study conducted in Peru (2006), occupational independency and possibility of adjusting working hours were introduced as the most important motivational factors.³ Other studies have also referred to social respect and occupational independency.^{1-5,12} Since male students, like previous studies, included income as one of the factors in their study choice more than female ones.^{4,11} it cannot be completely ignored. Female students focus more on serving society and family advice, i.e. girls are more affected by their families and pay attention to social aspect of dentistry. In similar studies, female students referred to the two above-mentioned factors more than other ones.^{2,5,11,14}

On the other hand, dentistry- comprised of science and art- requires handwork skills. But as observed, possibility of handwork occupied the 8th rank. It is a little worrisome since it was not regarded as a valuable factor in other studies conducted within the previous years.^{1,4,5,10} It is better that candidates get more acquainted with working environment of dentistry and reconsider their selection or try to improve and promote their handwork skills, if they are not sufficiently skilled in handwork. An Indian study conducted in 2009 demonstrated that possibility of handwork as well as occupational independency was introduced as important factors in choosing the field by the students.²

Conclusion

In previously conducted studies, dental students referred to social respect, occupational independency, and serving society as the most important motivational factors in choosing the field. It is confirmed by the present study, too. Providing correct information, the opportunity can be used to promote dentists position in society and improve public attitude toward the field. Female students' families

play a significant role in choosing dentistry as their study field. Families may cause their children failure if they are not completely aware of university fields or talents of their children. Therefore, it is better to provide proper information in this regard, too. According to the studies especially those conducted in Iran within recent years, handwork is not regarded as a valuable factor. Therefore, it is required that candidates get more acquainted with artistic-scientific environment of dentistry. Factors such as income and occupational opportunity should not hinder the students from paying attention to other artistic and scientific aspects of the field.

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Ethical issues

Participants' information was kept confidential.

Competing interests

No competing interests to be declared.

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