

# Assessing the Minds of Young Budding Dentists - Starting Trouble for a Dental Start-Up

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## Abstract

Though dentistry is considered a respected and desirable profession, there are many impediments that a dentist faces before they are recognised and acknowledged in the dental fraternity. One may assume that the undergraduate training of five years will suffice or the “price paid” for the future but that is just the “tip of the iceberg”. This article attempts to shed some light on the mind set a young dental graduate, level of interest and confidence developed for private practice.

**Keywords:** Dental profession, Dental Specialty Practice, Private Dental Practice, Post graduate Diploma Courses, Undergraduate Studies

Date of Receiving: October 2018

Date of Submission: December 2018

Date of Acceptance: December 2018

## 1. Introduction

After completing schooling, students go through a phase of decision making to decide their future. In most circumstances, parents weigh in and compel their children into a profession they are not personally inclined. Fortunately, this is not always the case and some students are allowed to pursue their passion. The profession of medicine and dentistry are the most highly sought after profession. Each profession have their own struggles during the course of training and cannot be compared to each another. In dentistry, there is a range of career opportunities<sup>1</sup>. Students choose dentistry with a vision of a bright future in terms of prestige, interest in medicine, social status and noble motivation in helping people<sup>2,3</sup>. This article attempts to identify the basic challenges a young dental graduate confront in the initial phase of their professional life.

## 2. Aim

- To assess the level of interest developed by students during their course of training in the theoretical and practical aspects of different specialities of dentistry.

- To assess the level of confidence of a young dental graduate for an initial setup for private practice.
- To identify the difficulties faced by students in various fields to set up a dental practice.

## 3. Methodology

In this study, 80 undergraduate dental students in their Compulsory Rotatory Internship (CRI) were included in the study. A questionnaire comprising of 25 questions were distributed to each of the participants. Each participant was given 15-20 minutes to answer the questionnaire provided to them. A sample of the questionnaire is shown in Figure 1. The percentage of each response is shown in Table 1.

## 4. Discussion

The first set of questions in the questionnaire were aimed to determine the level of interest in dentistry for which around 97.5% of the participants had given a positive response in opting dentistry as a career choice. This was not the scenario a few decades ago where students would

**VINAYAKA MISSION'S SANKARAGHARIYAR DENTAL COLLEGE, SALEM**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE - CRI**

1. Are you interested in Dentistry?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  2. If no, why did you choose Dentistry?
    - a. I didn't get MBBS
    - b. My parents forced me
    - c. Good working hours (no night duty)
    - d. For the degree
    - e. Others
  3. If yes, which branch of dentistry do you enjoy the most?  
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  4. Why? Because...
    - a. I'm better theoretically than practically
    - b. I'm better practically than theoretically
    - c. I'm inspired by the staffs
    - d. I enjoy that particular departments handwork
    - e. I like kids
  5. Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practise, are you confident to diagnose and come up with a comprehensive and accurate treatment plan for your patient all by yourself?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  6. If no, would you prefer to
    - a. Educate yourself better
    - b. Call a consultant
  7. Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practise, are you confident to carry out all the basic endodontic procedures which we commonly face in private practise?  
I.e. composites, RCT
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  8. If no, would you prefer to
    - a. Educate yourself better
    - b. Call a consultant
  9. Would you prefer
    - a. Spending money to attend courses
    - b. Spending money to pay a consultant for each case.
  10. Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practise, are you confident to carry out all the minor orthodontic treatments for the patients?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  11. If no, would you prefer to
    - a. Educate yourself better
    - b. Call a consultant
  12. Would you prefer
    - a. Spending money to attend courses
    - b. Spending money to pay a consultant for each case
  13. Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practise are you confident to carry out all the minor surgical procedures all by yourself?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  14. If no, would you prefer to
    - a. Educate yourself better
    - b. Call a consultant
  15. Would you prefer
    - a. Spending money to attend courses
    - b. Spending money to pay a consultant for each case
  16. Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practise are you confident to carry out all the basic prosthodontic procedures? I.e. FPD, RPD, tooth preparation.
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  17. If no, would you prefer to
    - a. Educate yourself by attending courses
    - b. Call a consultant
  18. Would you prefer
    - a. Spending money to attend courses
    - b. Spending money to pay a consultant for each case
  19. If you start a clinic, do you know the ways to dispose medical waste properly?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  20. If you start a clinic, do you know how to manage a patient in an emergency condition alone by administering IM, IV, and performing CPR?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  21. What is your plan after completing BDS?
    - a. Setting up a private clinic
    - b. Pursuing PG
    - c. Leave dentistry to pursue my other passion
  22. What do you think is the most important challenge in setting up your private dental clinic?
    - a. Huge investment
    - b. Lacking confidence in practising alone
    - c. Others
  23. Are you aware that there are dental job opportunities in Defense, Railways, Government hospitals (PHC, etc), ONGC?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  24. Are you planning to work abroad?
    - a. Yes
    - b. No
  25. In your opinion, what do you think is the scope of dentistry in India? Justify your answer.
    - a. Good
    - b. Bad
- Justification:  
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Figure 1. Questionnaire.

**Table 1.** Response percentage

S. No	QUESTION	ANSWERS	%
1.	Are you interested in dentistry?	Yes	97.5%
		No	2.5%
2.	If no, why did you choose dentistry?	I didn't get MBBS	50%
		My parents forced me	0%
		Good working hours	0%
		For the degree	50%
		others	0%
3.	If yes, which branch of dentistry do you enjoy the most?	Oral medicine	3.8%
		Oral surgery	43.7%
		Periodontology	2.5%
		Endodontics	25%
		Orthodontics	10%
		Pedodontics	5%
		Prosthodontics	2.5%
		Public health dentistry	2.5%
		Oral pathology	5%
4.	Why? Because..	I'm better theoretically than practically	7.5%
		I'm better practically than theoretically	35%
		I'm inspired by the staffs	20%
		I enjoy that particular departments handwork	35%
		I like kids	2.5%
5.	Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practice, are you confident to diagnose and come up with a comprehensive and accurate treatment plan for your patient all by yourself?	Yes	42.5%
		No	57.5%
6.	If no, would you prefer to	Educate yourself better	97.8%
		Call a consultant	2.2%
7.	Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practice, are you confident to carry out all the basic endodontic procedures which we commonly face in private practice?	Yes	30%
		No	70%
8.	If no, would you prefer to	Educate yourself better	96.4%
		Call a consultant	3.6%
9.	Would you prefer	Spending money to attend courses	98.2%
		Spending money to pay a consultant for each case.	1.8%
10.	Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practice, are you confident to carry out all the minor orthodontic treatments for the patients?	Yes	22.5%
		No	77.5%
11.	If no, would you prefer to	Educate yourself better	66.1%
		Call a consultant	33.9%
12.	Would you prefer	Spending money to attend courses	69.4%
		Spending money to pay a consultant for each case.	30.6%

13.	Immediately after graduation, in your private dental practice are you confident to carry out all the minor surgical procedures all by yourself? i.e. impaction, broken root/tooth, incision and drainage, etc.	Yes	26.2%
		No	73.8%
14.	If no, would you prefer to	Educate yourself better.	89.8%
		Call a consultant	10.2%
15.	Would you prefer	Spending money to attend courses	94.9%
		Spending money to pay a consultant for each case	5.1%
16.	Immediately after graduation, in your private practice is you confident to carry out all the basic Prosthodontic procedures? i.e. FPD, RPD, tooth preparation etc	Yes	81.2%
		No	18.8%
17.	If no, would you prefer to	Educate yourself by attending courses.	60%
		Call a consultant.	40%
18.	Would you prefer	Spending money to attend courses	73.3%
		Spending money to pay a consultant for each case	26.7%
19.	If you start a clinic, do you know the ways to dispose medical waste properly?	Yes	76.3%
		No	23.7%
20.	If you start a clinic, do you know how to manage a patient in an emergency condition alone by administering IM, IV, and performing CPR?	Yes	25%
		No	75%
21.	What is your plan after completing BDS?	Setting up a private clinic.	27.5%
		Pursuing PG	67.5%
		Leave dentistry to pursue my other passion.	5%
22.	What do you think is the most important challenge in setting up your private dental clinic?	Huge investment	42.5%
		Lacking confidence in practicing alone	40%
		Others	17.5%
23.	Are you aware that there are dental job opportunities in defense, railways, government hospitals (PHC, etc), ONGC?	Yes	82.5%
		No	17.5%
24.	Are you planning to work abroad?	Yes	63.7%
		No	36.3%
25.	In your opinion, what do you think is the scope of dentistry in India? Justify your answer.	Good	46.3%
		Bad	53.7%

opt medicine as their primary choice leaving dentistry as an optional career along with other professional degrees. Around 1.5% of interns who were not interested in dentistry gave the reason for having decided on dentistry was because they were unable to enroll for medicine while the remaining 1% chose it for the degree.

The questionnaire continued by asking them to state which speciality they preferred and it was no surprise that 43.7% selected the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. Regarding other departments, the order of interest, in descending order, 25% preferred the field of

Endodontics, 10% in Orthodontics, 5% in Pedodontics and Oral Pathology, 3.8% in Oral Medicine and Radiology and an equal 2.5% in Periodontology and Prosthodontics. Students these days seem to prefer clinical departments such as endodontics and orthodontics. Despite being known to be one of the hardest clinical department in the curriculum almost half of the interns enjoyed the practice of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

The reasons given for the level of interest in the field that they chose, 35% believed they were better practically than theoretically and that they enjoyed that particular

“hand work” of the opted speciality. Around 20% cited inspiration from the staffs in that particular department and 6% felt that they were better theoretically than practically. Half of the 5% that chose Pedodontics gave the reason for choosing the specialty is that they interacted better with children and preferred treating pediatric patients.

Then we directed the questionnaire to assess their confidence level in setting up a private dental practice immediately after graduation. Around 42% of the interns were confident to diagnose and come up with a comprehensive treatment plan for the patient by themselves, while the remaining 57.5% stated that even with enough patient exposure, felt that they were not confident to manage patients without the guidance of staff and their presence provided the moral support to perform dental procedures. A jarring 97.8% of interns stated that they were open to educating themselves by attending workshops and fellowship trainings in obtaining the skill to treat patients themselves than calling a consultant. This is further supported when they were asked if they were confident to carry out basic procedures in other specialties (such as root canal procedures with minor surgical interventions, fixed orthodontics and minor surgical procedures) to which almost 75% of them responded negatively but were willing to learn by attending courses.

Despite Prosthodontics being one of the least preferred department, it had the highest percentage, 81.2% of interns being confident in carrying out basic prosthodontics procedures like tooth preparation, removable and fixed partial dentures and complete dentures.

A staggering 76.3% and 75% responded negatively when asked if they know how to dispose medical waste correctly in private practice and to manage patients in an actual emergency situation by administering IM, IV or performing CPR respectively despite of having attended hands on training courses.

Next, we asked them on their plans after completing undergraduate course. For which, 67.5% of them have plans to pursue a postgraduate degree, 27.5% opted to start their own private practice and only 5% wished to shift from dentistry. Students willing to continue in the dentistry after completing the course were significantly higher than those who wish to shift from the profession. Increasing competition in cities and awareness among people was one of the factors for higher percentage of students aspiring for postgraduate degree<sup>4</sup>.

When asked on what they think is the most important challenge in setting up a private dental clinic, an equal majority said huge investment and lack of confidence. Only 17.5% cited other reasons.

Around 82.5% of interns are aware of the scope or opportunities in government sectors such as railway, defense and hospitals. More than half of the students have plans to work abroad, this may be due to the fact that 53.7% believe that they can have better prospects abroad and can earn comparative more abroad.

## 5. Conclusion

Dentistry is no longer considered a profession of “second” choice after medicine. In the present study, students show intrinsic motivation for pursuing dentistry than by the compulsion of their parents<sup>5</sup>. The field has emerged from its simpler roots to a respected and lucrative profession on par with medicine with current trend on esthetics and facial makeover. Students do obtain the necessary training in treating patients but lack confidence in managing a private dental practice. A private dental practice requires dentists to follow a comprehensive approach in dealing and managing with patients. Despite these challenges the students face, dentistry is nowadays a preferred profession second to none, opted by choice and not by compulsion.

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