

Original Research

Attitude towards pursuing Orthodontics as their specialization: A survey among Indian undergraduate dental students

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The healthcare workforce is an important element of society and a vital resource within healthcare, with dentistry being no exception. The present study was planned for assessing attitude of undergraduate dental students towards pursuing Orthodontics as their specialization. **Materials & Methods:** A total of 50 undergraduate students were enrolled. A Questionnaire was framed and was designed to investigate the students' backgrounds and their perspectives towards postgraduate specialisation as well as factors that would discourage/influence their choices. The questionnaire was distributed to the students. All the results were recorded and subjected to statistical analysis. **Results:** Out of 50 subjects, 42 percent of the subjects showed positive response and positive desire for pursuing orthodontic as specialist career. Among these 21 subjects, 61.9 percent were males while the remaining 38.1 percent were females. Among the 29 patients who didn't wanted to pursue orthodontic as specialist career or who were not sure, 34.5 percent of the subjects blamed it to be time consuming. In 27.6 percent of the subjects and 24.1 percent of the subjects, the major factor for not choosing orthodontic as a specialist was "too expensive" and "too competitive" respectively. **Conclusion:** This study demonstrated that a large number of undergraduates had an intention to specialise in orthodontic, although many were still undecided at this stage because of its time and financial aspect.

Key words: Orthodontic, Undergraduate

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INTRODUCTION

The healthcare workforce is an important element of society and a vital resource within healthcare, with dentistry being no exception. This essential sector of the healthcare workforce is influenced by the wider context including political, societal, and economic change. Previous authors have highlighted potential tensions between student motivation for selecting their professional care and the practice of dentistry; thus, it becomes imperative to understand the opinions and expectations of the prospective individuals to retain a motivated workforce.¹⁻³

There is increasing demand for orthodontic treatment in society today. This can be due to increasing awareness of malocclusion, treatment availability, importance given to aesthetics and facial appearance. Orthodontic conditions are often considered to be of lesser importance by most health professionals, as they are not considered as life-threatening conditions.

However, the early treatment of malocclusion is important, because it affects quality of life.^{4, 5} It has been reported that a dental undergraduate's "possession of special skills or talent" was the main reason for wanting to specialize rather than any financial factor, and again, Orthodontics was the most preferred subject. This study also concluded that gender was not an important determinant when it came to choosing a specialty, which is consistent with previous studies.^{6, 7} Hence; the present study was planned for assessing attitude of undergraduate dental students towards pursuing Orthodontics as their specialization.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The present study was planned for assessing attitude of undergraduate dental students towards pursuing Orthodontics as their specialization. A total of 50 undergraduate students were enrolled. A

Questionnaire was framed and was designed to investigate the students' backgrounds and their perspectives towards postgraduate specialisation as well as factors that would discourage/influence their choices. The questionnaire was distributed to the students. All the results were recorded and subjected to statistical analysis.

RESULTS

A total of 50 subjects with mean age of 23.5 years were enrolled. Among these 50 subjects, 20 were males while the remaining 30 were females. Out of 50 subjects, 42 percent of the subjects showed positive response and positive desire for pursuing orthodontic as specialist career. Among these 21 subjects, 61.9 percent were males while the remaining 38.1 percent were females. Among the 29 patients who didn't wanted to pursue orthodontic as specialist career or who were not sure, 34.5 percent of the subjects blamed it to be time consuming. In 27.6 percent of the subjects and 24.1 percent of the subjects, the major factor for not choosing orthodontic as a specialist was "too expensive" and "too competitive" respectively.

Table 1: Percentage of subjects by their desire to pursue orthodontics as specialist career

Respond	Males; n (%)	Females; n (%)	Total; n (%)
Yes	13 (61.9%)	8 (38.1%)	21 (42%)
No	6 (33.3%)	12 (66.7%)	18 (36%)
Don't know	1 (9.1%)	10 (90.9%)	11 (22%)
Total	20 (40%)	30 (60%)	50 (100%)

Table 2: Factors discouraging decision to specialise

Factors	Males; n (%)	Females; n (%)	Total; n (%)
Time consuming	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10 (34.5%)
Too expensive	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	8 (27.6%)
Too competitive	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	7 (24.1%)
Others	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	4 (13.8%)
Total	16 (55.2%)	13 (44.8%)	29 (100%)

DISCUSSION

Background Despite increased numbers of dental specialists; around 90% of dentists in the India continue to work in general practice. Previous research shows that undergraduate students indicate interest in specialty careers; however few studies have explored which specialties are of interest, when and why. Hence; the present study was planned for assessing attitude of undergraduate dental students towards pursuing Orthodontics as their specialization.⁷⁻

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attitude of undergraduate dental students towards pursuing Orthodontics as their specialization.

A total of 50 subjects with mean age of 23.5 years were enrolled. Among these 50 subjects, 20 were males while the remaining 30 were females. Out of 50 subjects, 42 percent of the subjects showed positive response and positive desire for pursuing orthodontic as specialist career. Among these 21 subjects, 61.9 percent were males while the remaining 38.1 percent were females. Mendonca M et al conducted a study among 132 first year MBBS students at a medical college with a dental college {A} and 127 first year MBBS students in a stand-alone medical college {B}. A pre-piloted, validated, self-administered questionnaire was distributed among the students. Data collected was entered in Microsoft Excel. There was a difference between male and female students' awareness and their attitudes towards orthodontics. There were significant differences in the attitudes and awareness of the subject of Orthodontics between those students studying in a medical college with an attached dental college when compared with those medical students studying in a stand-alone medical college. The medical students who studied in an institution with an attached dental college had better awareness of the subject of orthodontics as compared to medical students of a stand-alone medical college.⁹ In the present study, among the 29 patients who didn't wanted to pursue orthodontic as specialist career or who were not sure, 34.5 percent of the subjects blamed it to be time consuming. In 27.6 percent of the subjects and 24.1 percent of the subjects, the major factor for not choosing orthodontic as a specialist was "too expensive" and "too competitive" respectively. Purver J et al explore the attitudes towards postgraduate specialisation of final-year students at one UK dental school and to identify any possible influencing factors. A cross-sectional survey of all 73 final-year students using an anonymous self-report questionnaire was carried out. The response rate was 79%, of which nearly two-thirds were female. Age, ethnicity and parental occupation did not have an effect on the intention to specialise, although student gender did, with more females not wishing to specialise ($p = 0.006$). Having a 'talent in the field' had the largest positive influence on pursuing a specialist career (37.9% of responses), whilst the length of time needed to obtain a specialist qualification was seen as the largest negative influence (41.1% of responses). The two most popular subjects were Restorative Dentistry and Orthodontics with 24.1% and 20.7% of students listing them as their first choices, respectively.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that a large number of undergraduates had an intention to specialise in orthodontic, although many were still undecided at this stage because of its time and financial aspect.

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