

Socio-demographic Backgrounds and Career Decisions of Dental Students; A Survey Done in Riyadh Colleges of Dentistry and Pharmacy, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Introduction: The policies to go for dentistry as a career are different from country to country. If the universities are not state funded then the individuals have to pay from their own pockets. This requires a huge deal of finances, therefore strong economic background. In recent decades, dentistry comes one of the most competitor major to study through all freshmen around the world. A great emphasis has been placed on the main responsibility of health care professionals including dentists, to promote the health of the general public.

Materials and Methods: The survey consisted of questions related to demographics, current living status, parents' education etc. The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS.

Results: Variables including type of secondary education, father's profession, effect of vocational counselor, motivation from financial prospects were found to be statistically significant when compared between males and females. Females were found to be more self-motivated when it came to career decision making.

Conclusions: Majority of students lived with their parents and studied in private schools. Strongest motivation factor in decision making was 'self-motivation', with vocational counselors and school teachers being the least motivating factors.

Keywords: Demographic Backgrounds; Dentistry; Career Choice; Motivational Factors

Introduction

As licensed healthcare workers, dentists occupy an important position in society. There have been several studies by dental educators and researchers concerning the motives for entering the dental profession. The motivating factors for selecting any career are complex, and dentistry is no exception. Many issues may be considered when choosing a career, including one's own strengths and weaknesses, interests and desires and willingness and financial ability to complete a possibly lengthy period of training as well as the type of work involved in a particular career, work environment, financial rewards and availability and attractiveness of alternative careers. Moreover, the relative importance of these factors may differ between men and women [1].

Dental students in any country come from different backgrounds and cultures. Backgrounds may include the city/town, family background, social and economic status, educational background of family etc. A study was conducted in Australia, which revealed that approximately half of the students had completed secondary education in private schools with remaining percentage having finished in public

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schools. The majority of students lived with their parents, with only a few respondents reporting a rural home address. The majority of students had placed dentistry as their first career choice and had most likely made the decision after leaving high school or near the end of high school with self-motivation being the major influence on their decision. This study provides a description of the socio-demographic profile of dental students and provides a better understanding of career decision issues [2].

The policies to go for dentistry as a career are different from country to country. If the universities are not state funded then the individuals have to pay from their own pockets. This requires a huge deal of finances, therefore strong economic background. As far as the state funded universities are concerned, the students are selected on merit and they come from varying backgrounds. On the other hand, self-funded universities have students who usually come from rich backgrounds as dental studies are one of the costliest among others [3]. Another factor in choosing dentistry as a career is its socioeconomic prospects, which attract the students to go for this profession. Importance of financial motivation cannot be ignored [4].

In recent decades, dentistry comes one of the most competitor major to study through all freshmen around the world. A great emphasis has been placed on the main responsibility of health care professionals including dentists, to promote the health of the general public. The success of these efforts requires dentists to be committed to an ethical attitude of public service. In these efforts, knowledge of dental students' expectations of their profession as well as their motives to study dentistry is of great importance. There was a study done to investigate the study motives and career choices of Iranian senior dental students in relation to their background factors. The results of this study reveal that personal characteristics and motives of Iranian dental students play a more significant role in shaping their career preferences than their dental education [5].

Aims of the Study

- Determine the social and demographic backgrounds of dental students.
- Determine the extent of effect of the demographic factors on career choice.
- Compare between male and females.

Materials and Methods

This is a cross sectional study, which intended to involve the undergraduate dental students of RCsDP. The target sample size was 400 male and female students from all campuses, but the total number of questionnaires returned was N = 373. A closed ended questionnaire was constructed, which was sent to level 9, 10, 11 and 12 students. The data consisted of questions related to demographics, current living status, parents' education etc. The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS. Descriptive statistics was done including Chi-square test to determine the value of significance, which was kept under 0.05.

Results

We had a total of 373 dental students. Males constituted of 47% whereas females 53%. 40% of the participants belonged to Riyadh region, 24% from the eastern region, 16% from the western region, 11% from south and 9% from northern region of Saudi Arabia.

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	173	46.4	46.4	46.4
	Female	200	53.6	53.6	100.0
	Total	373	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Male vs. female ratio of participants.

Origin					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Riyadh region	148	39.7	39.7	39.7
	East	89	23.9	23.9	63.5
	West	61	16.4	16.4	79.9
	South	42	11.3	11.3	91.2
	North	33	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	373	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Home town distribution of students.

Count				
Secondary Education				
		Public School	Private School	Total
Gender	Male	96	77	173
	Female	81	119	200
Total		177	196	373

Table 3: Ratio of male and female students who attended private and public schools.

P- Value: 0.005

Count						
Current Living Status						
		With Parents	Renting	Hostel	Other	Total
Gender	Male	103	44	21	5	173
	Female	161	20	15	4	200
Total		264	64	36	9	373

Table 4: Comparison between males and females regarding their current living status.

P-Value: 0.003

Count						
Father's Occupation						
		Unemployed	Owns business	Private Job	Government Job	Total
Gender	Male	17	55	47	54	173
	Female	9	52	41	98	200
Total		26	107	88	152	373

Table 5: Comparison between males and females regarding the fathers' occupation.

P-Value: 0.009

Count		Self-Motivation					Total
		No influence	Little influence	Moderate influence	Strong influence	Very strong influence	
Gender	Male	13	19	42	41	58	173
	Female	3	17	57	58	65	200
Total		16	36	99	99	123	373

Tables 6: 'Self-motivation' as a factor influencing decision making.
P-Value: 0.040

Count		Effect of Vocational Counselor					Total
		No influence	Little influence	Moderate influence	Strong influence	Very strong influence	
Gender	Male	50	50	45	19	9	173
	Female	99	34	45	13	9	200
Total		149	84	90	32	18	373

Table 7: Effect of vocational counselor on decision making.
P-Value: 0.001

Count		Monetary Advantage					Total
		No influence	Little influence	Moderate influence	Strong influence	Very strong influence	
Gender	Male	5	40	62	48	18	173
	Female	13	23	64	64	36	200
Total		18	63	126	112	54	373

Table 8: Gender comparison regarding the influence of monetary advantage in decision making.
P-Value: 0.004

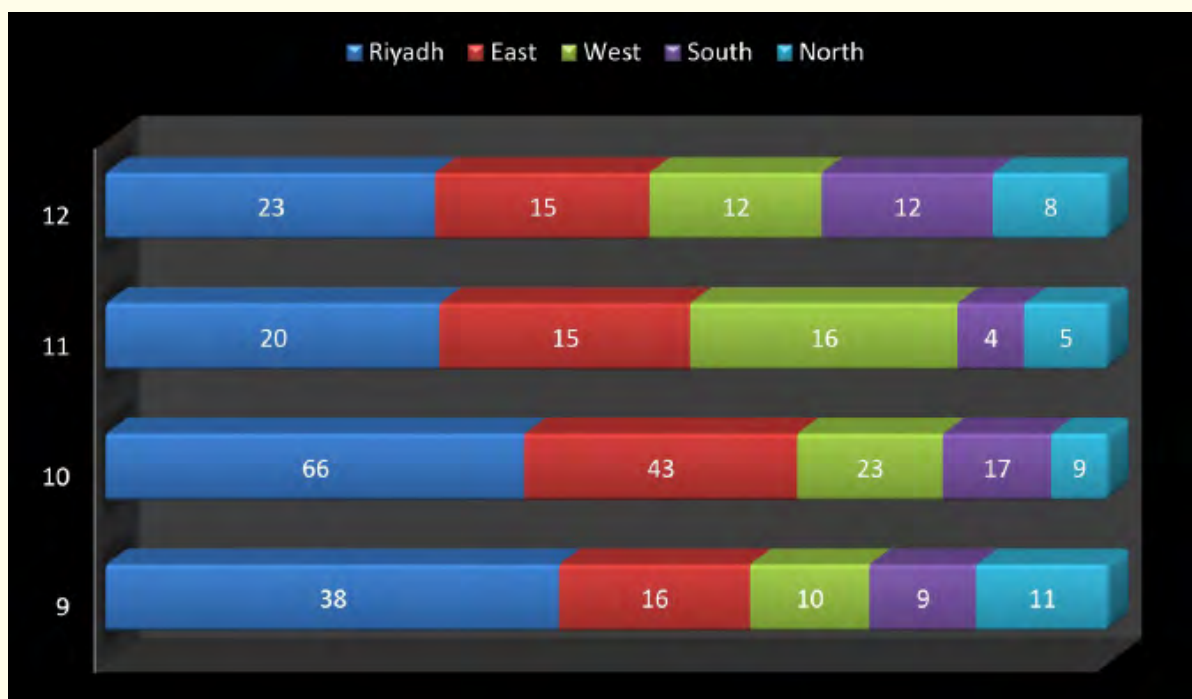


Figure 1: Home town distribution of students of various levels.
P-Value: 0.347

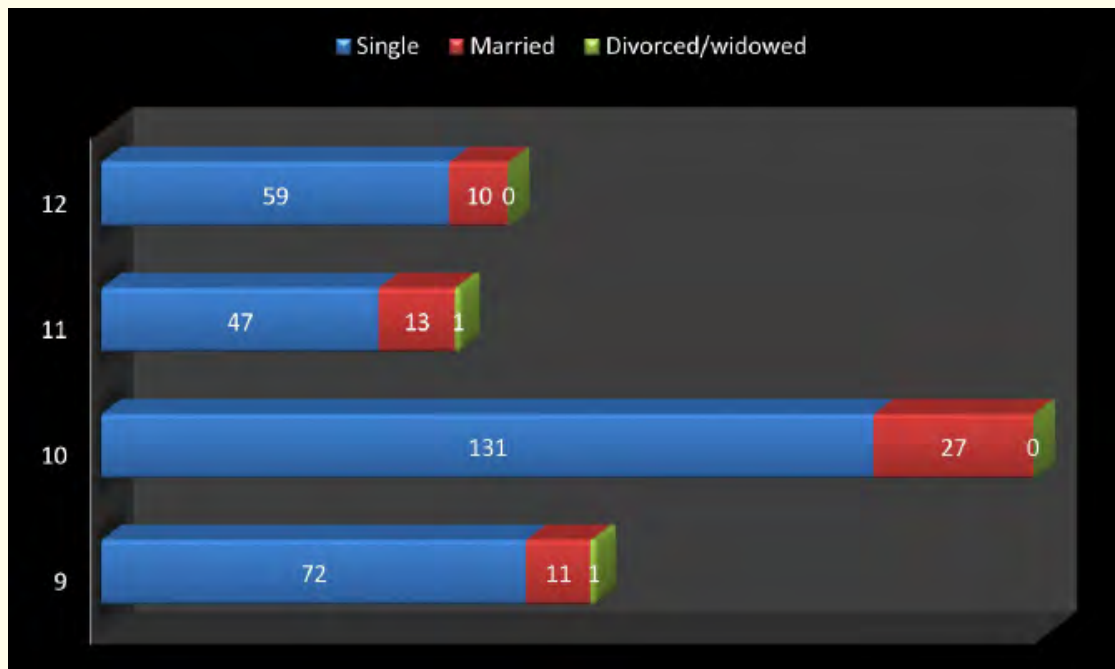


Figure 2: Marital status of students from various levels of dentistry.
P-Value: 0.613

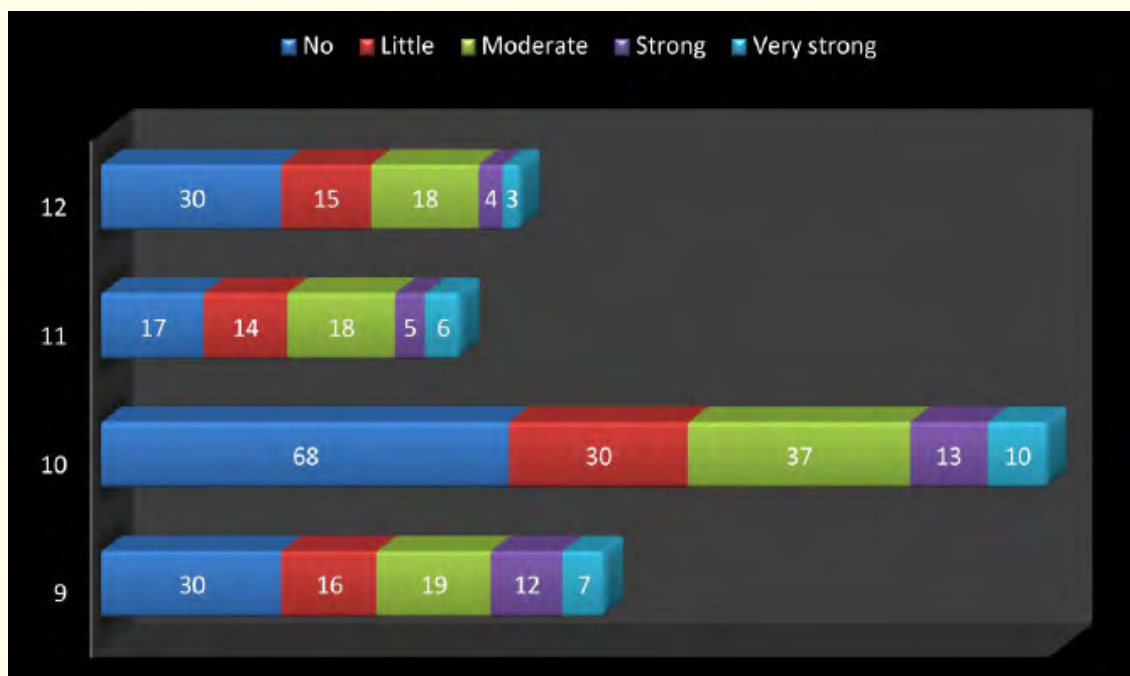


Figure 3: Degree of 'Influence' of school teachers on various level students' career decision.
P-Value: 0.623

Discussion

We used an Australian study as our reference and utilized the important points from that research to be a part of this study. Although the Australian study was done on a large scale; covering all major dental schools of the country, we made this effort to utilize the dental

students of RCDP only, as we faced a deadline in the academic year. Our future goal is to expand the scope of this study to various other dental schools as it has never been done before in Saudi Arabia.

The results of our study revealed significant differences between males and females as far as the questions asked in the survey were concerned. Variables including type of secondary education, father's profession, effect of vocational counselor, motivation from financial prospects were found to be statistically significant when compared between males and females. Females were found to be more self-motivated when it came to career decision making.

There were no significant differences found among the different levels of dentistry though. It is important to explain the pattern of dental education in Saudi Arabia in order to understand the levels of dental students. Dentistry is completed in 6 years and there are 2 levels in each year. Therefore, level 9 and 10 students belong to year 5 and level 11 and 12 to year 6.

When compared the findings with the one done in Australia, not much of the difference was observed from our study results.

Conclusions

1. Majority of the students belonged to Riyadh region with second highest being eastern province.
2. Majority of students lived with their parents and studied in private schools.
3. Strongest motivation factor in decision making was 'self-motivation', with vocational counselors and school teachers being the least motivating factors.

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