

EFFECT OF COUNSELLING ON PREFERENCE OF SPECIALITY IN DENTAL STUDENTS OF KHYBER COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To identify the preferences of dental graduates in the field of post-graduate specialty, factors that may influence their decision to select a particular specialty, and the effect of counselling on specialty preferences.

Material & Method: A pre-counselling and post-counselling questionnaire based study was carried out among final year students and House surgeons of Khyber College of Dentistry, Peshawar, between May to June 2020. A self-administered questionnaire, inquiring about the preference of specialty program, specialty subject and the reason for the preference, was given to the students. After filling the questionnaire, the participants were given a session on dental career counselling. After the session, they were again asked about their preference for a specialty for their future career. Both results were then compared.

Results: The most prevalent specialty before counselling was Endodontics (36.2%). The second one was Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (21.3%) and then Periodontics (16.3%). After counselling, preference for Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery remained the same, however, Endodontics and Periodontics were reduced to 33.8% and 13.8%, respectively. Among post-graduation specialty programs, FCPS was the most prevalent program (77.5%).

Conclusion: Endodontics is the most preferred specialty among graduates followed by Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. The most preferred program was FCPS. A single counselling session did not change the preference significantly. The reason most likely behind the preference was possession of unique set of skills for the specialty.

Key words: Dental graduates preferences, Specialties, Counselling

This article may be cited as: Saood M, Naz T, Shabir S, Saif U, Wadood S, Shah AM. Effect of counselling on preference of specialty in dental students of Khyber College of Dentistry. J Med Sci 2022 January;30(1):53-56

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade and a half, with the increase in the number of supervisors and infrastructure of post graduate programs throughout the world, the interest and quest for post-graduation among dental students has increased.¹ As with the medical field, the dental field as well has now well-developed clinical and non-clinical specialty programs. All specialties, clinical or non-clinical, require certain specific skill sets and talents.^{2, 3} As per statistics of WHO, Pakistan is facing an acute shortage of dentists. However, the situation with the creation of Postgraduate Medical Institutes (PGMI) and College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) promoting both clinical and Basic Specialty is improving.²

American Dental Education Association reports that residency in Advanced General Dentistry is the most

sought off by the post graduate residency. The other nine residencies are Orthodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Pediatrics Dentistry, Prosthodontics, Endodontics, Oral Maxillofacial Radiology and Dental Public Health.³ A study in Saudi Arabia showed Orthodontics was the most pursued residency, followed by Endodontics, Operative Dentistry, Prosthodontics, Periodontics and then Advanced Restorative Dentistry.⁴ In Pakistan there are multiple programs which are being followed such as FCPS, MCPS and MDS in the clinical field, as well as in basic fields by the College of Physicians and Surgeons and MSC and MPhil.⁵

One of the practices lacking severely in the profession of dentistry is career counselling. Graduates and undergraduates require career counselling so that they can receive ample baseline information before they make a wise decision. Peng et al in a study showed that counselling helped participants who were facing indecisions in their career's path.⁶ A study in Nigeria reported feedback from graduates that career counselling empowered undergraduates in rightfully choosing post graduate specialties.⁷ A study done in Rawalpindi showed that counselling did influence the decision of graduates in the selection of postgraduate specialty.⁸ Khyber College of Dentistry is one of the oldest and prestigious institutes in the province

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Date Received: 15-01-2022

Date Revised: 23-02-2022

Date Accepted: 20-03-2022

of KPK. As of yet, there is absence of any data on which specialties are prioritized by dental students once they graduate and what are the reasons behind the preference. Also, there is deficiency in knowledge of whether counselling session in general and one counselling session in specific will influence these dental graduates' decisions in selection of their specialty. The aim of this study is to find out the preferences of the graduates in the specialty they prefer, the reason for the preference and also to find out whether one career counselling session influences their preference.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

This pre/post-Counselling questionnaire based study was approved in January 2020 by Institute Ethical Review Committee and was carried out between May to June, 2020. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed among 80 students of final year and house surgeons of Khyber College of Dentistry, Peshawar. The questionnaire was initially developed from studies previously done on the topic.^{4,7}

Initially a face validity was done by scrutiny of questions by three medical educationists and four subject specialists of orthodontics later content validity was done through a pilot study. Twenty final year students and house officers were given the questionnaire to be filled. These students and house officers were later not included as a part in the current study. The Cronbach alpha value came to 0.9 in the Pilot study. Sampling technique was non-probability consecutive sampling. In the first phase, all participants were asked about their preferences in the post graduate specialty subject, and the reason why they prefer a specific specialty.

They were further asked about their preference in different post-graduation programs like FCPS, MCPS, MDS, MSc & MPhil. After the questionnaire, they were given a counselling session with a panel of medical educationists and a group of faculty members already involved in the above-mentioned programs. The counseling session comprised of PowerPoint presentations explaining

strengths and limitations of each program, The skill sets and personality traits required for the Programs. The content of the counseling session was kept such that equal time was given to all career options and an unbiased approach was maintained by the panel of educationist and faculty members towards each program. After the session, they were again asked to fill the same questionnaire given before the counselling session. The data compiled was analyzed in SPSS version 2.0. The results were then displayed in the form of tables and figures. Frequencies of preferences before and after the counselling session were generated. The difference between the two was compared using Marginal Homogeneity test.

RESULTS

All the 80 participants of this study responded to the questionnaire. Gender distribution was predominantly females (67.5%) to males (32.5%). Among postgraduate programs, FCPS was the most preferred program (77.5%), followed by MPhil (8.8%). The specialty program least responded by the study participants was MSc in Dentistry. (Figure 1) The most prevalent specialty subject was Endodontics with 36.2%, followed by Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, 21.3% and Periodontics, 16.3%. The least opted specialty was Prosthodontics. (Table I) After the counselling session, program preferences before and after counselling remained unchanged. (Figure 1) Endodontics remained the most prevalent specialty subject, with a preference rate of 33.2%, followed by Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery 21.3% and Periodontics 13.8%. Prosthodontic still was the least opted specialty. (Table I)

On applying marginal homogeneity test, it was apparent that a single counselling session did not make a statistically significant difference in the preference of the selection of the Specialty ($p=0.136$). Most common reason given by the participant for preference of specialty selected was that graduates thought they had the skill sets required for the specialty. Second most common reason was the preference for later private practice in the said field. Third reason was the prestige and integrity of the

Table1: Perception of Specialties before and after Counselling

Specialty	Before	After		Margin Homogeneity Test
	No. of participants	Percentage	No. of participants	
Endodontics	29	36.2	27	0.136
Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery	17	21.3	17	
Periodontics	13	16.3	11	
Orthodontics	6	7.5	7	
Pediatric Dentistry	4	5	4	
Dental Public Health	4	5	2	
Oral Pathology	4	5	4	
Restorative & Esthetic Dentistry	3	3.7	4	
Prosthodontics	0	0	4	

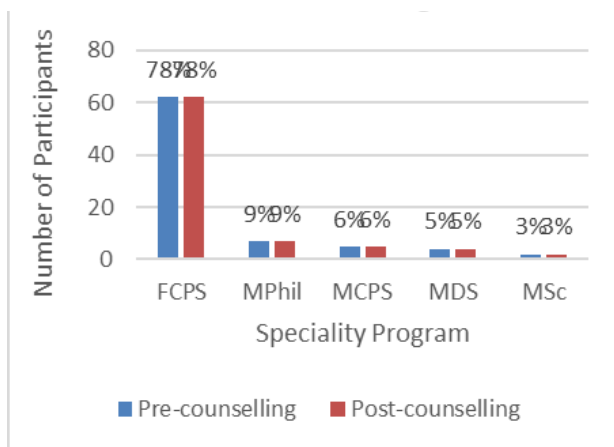


Fig 1: Preference of Specialty programs before & after Counselling

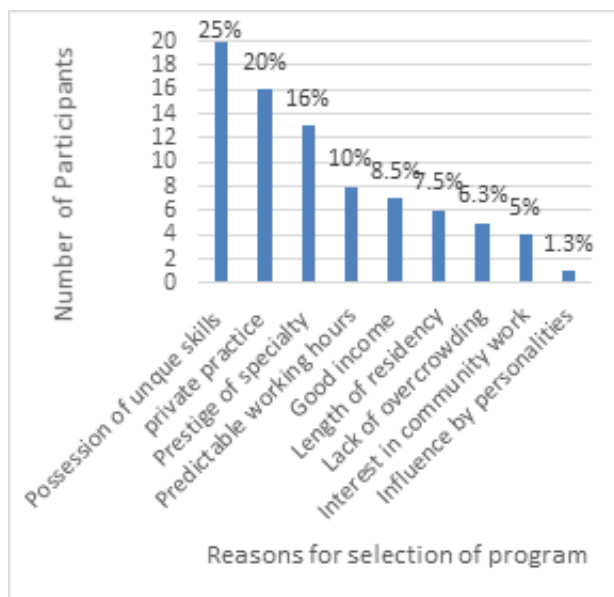


Fig 2: Reasons given for selection of Program

specialty. (Figure II)

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to determine the preferences of dental specialty by the final year dental students and house surgeons, and also to investigate whether a single session influenced the dental specialty selection.

This study demonstrated that the most preferred specialty subjects were Endodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and Periodontics, which is slightly different to a study done in Saudi Arabia where the preferred specialties were Orthodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and Pediatric Dentistry.⁴ One of the likeliest reasons why orthodontics is less of a preferred specialty among the participants of this study is the relative lack of oral hygiene awareness of the population and the length of the treatment orthodontic patients require.^{9,10}

Although the participants in the counselling session asked many questions about different specialties from the conveners of the session, however, there was no statistically significant difference in the preference of specialties before and after the single counselling session. A study done in Rawalpindi showed a similar pattern where the preferences before and after two counselling sessions did not change dramatically. However, the counselling session did show significant difference in the preference of specialty subject selected. In terms of programs of specialty, there was no difference in the preferences of participants. Our results can signify that one counselling session, regardless of how elaborate, cannot bring a difference in the preference of the participants. From a different perspective it can also imply that the participants were already clear on the preferences beforehand and had made up their decisions.

In terms of main reason for the preference, Jonathan et al revealed that dentistry as a career was selected mostly by students due to less demanding duty hours.¹¹ Another study in Saudi Arabia showed that majorly, the preference is influenced by the family members and the scope of the specialty in private practice.^{4,12} In our study the participant usually preferred the specialty they believed they had the unique skills set for. The participant preference in our study was, like the above-mentioned study, influenced by the private practice. The influence by family members was the least selected reason in our study probably because families are more interested towards medical profession than dental profession.¹³

One of the concerning findings in our study was that the specialty of dental materials was not opted by any of the participants. Also clinical specialties were selected by majority of participants with very little heed towards non-clinical specialties even though the counselling session had discussed them as a good option as well.

The main limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one dental college. Future studies should concentrate towards taking participants from all the dental colleges to understand preferences of dental specialties. Also, our study did not take into account gender preference of specialty. In our study the participants were only exposed to one counselling session and in future studies longer and more abundant counselling sessions can be scheduled. In our study, their least preferred specialty and the reason behind them were not inquired or recorded. Future studies should inquire these perspectives as well.

Conclusion: Our study concluded that Endodontics is the most preferred specialty among graduates followed by Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and the most preferred program was FCPS. A single counselling session did not change the preference significantly. The reason most likely behind the preference was possession of

unique set of skills for the specialty and financial perspectives.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Authors declare no conflict of interest

GRANT SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE: NIL

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Following authors have made substantial contributions to the manuscript as under

Saood M:	Idea of article abstract.
Naz T:	Data collection results discussion writing.
Shabir S:	Questionnaire Formatting
Saif U:	Final approval
Wadood S:	Final approval
Shah AM:	Literate search, Questionnaire formatting and overall supervision

Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.