

## Reason for Choosing Dentistry as Career among Male Dental Students in Ajman University

Ali MH Montazeri and Ibrahim K AL-Marzok\*

Professor, Department of restorative Dentistry, college of Dentistry, Ajman University, Ajman, United Arab Emirate

\*Corresponding Author: Ibrahim K AL-Marzok, Professor, Department of restorative Dentistry, college of Dentistry, Ajman University, Ajman, United Arab Emirate.

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### Abstract

This is a cross-sectional study to investigate the reasons for choosing dentistry as a career by male dental students in Ajman University. The method adopted was an anonymous questioner consisted of 22 questions, each containing a statement, which require the respondent to choose YES or NO. 150 male students randomly selected from 1<sup>st</sup> year up to 5<sup>th</sup> year. The top four reasons for choosing dentistry as a career were, prestige (95.3%), self-employment (93.3%), autonomy (90%), and helping people (90%) as well. A significant difference was found regarding autonomy as a reason, in respondents whom their parents are doctors ( $p = 0.022$ ). A significant difference found also between students who are in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years (attending clinics) chose "prestige" and "more regular hours than other professions".

**Keywords:** Dentistry; Career; Dental Students

### Introduction

Dentists occupy an important role in society as professional health care workers [1]. The opportunity to participate in dental education in many countries, especially in the developing ones, is limited to a small percentage of the community [2]. These situations place great responsibility on faculties of dentistry or dental schools to select the most suitable applicants, both professionally and socially, for the ultimate benefit of the communities [3-5]. Before advisors can plan to attract individuals to dentistry, they must study the underlying reasons that either males or females have to come into dentistry, what satisfaction they hope to gain from its practice and what it means in their career lives. It has been also suggested that having an insight into the motivations of those contemplating dental studies may assist in the evaluation of dental education plan [5-7] and a better understanding of students' reasons for entering the dental profession may facilitate a fruitful interaction between student and teacher [2]. Motives for choosing a career are complex and the choice of dentistry as a career is no exception. Motivations for choosing dentistry had been studied in many countries. A range of reasons have been mentioned including status and security, the nature of the occupation, patient care and working with people [8]. Most of the research investigating reasons for choosing dentistry as a career has been carried out in developed countries [9-12]. In Ajman University, college of dentistry the acceptance of students depends upon their performance in high school, students with highest marks only enrolled to limited available seats. During their classes, male and female students are traditionally segregated.

### Aim of the Study

The aim of this investigation was to determine motivations for choosing dentistry as a career by male dental students in Ajman University during the academic year 2013 - 2014.

### Materials and Methods

This is a cross-sectional study to evaluate reasons for choosing dentistry as a career in male students in Ajman University, UAE. The method adopted was an anonymous questionnaire distributed by the authors to students from years 1 to 5 at the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Ajman. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Ajman and participant information sheet/ consent form was taken from each student. Each student completed a questionnaire following brief information about the study and the questionnaire was retrieved maximum in two days. Our sample was 150 students that selected randomly from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>st</sup> year.

The questionnaire consisted of 22 items with each item on the questionnaire containing a statement which required the respondent to indicate YES or NO. All data management and statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS 16.0 windows version (SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA). Age and year of study were described by mean and standard deviation. Non-parametric data analysis with  $X^2$  test to compare statistical differences between groups. A 5% level of significance was used for all tests ( $P < 0.05$ ).

## Results

150 male students were fill the questionnaire form. Mean of students age was  $21.48 \pm 2.48$  years old (18.0 - 34.0). Mean of year spend in University was  $3.19 \pm 1.56$  years (1.0 - 9.0).

Figure 1 show the reasons for choosing dentistry as a career among the participants, it shows that the top four reasons for choosing dentistry as a career are prestige (95.3%), self-employed (93.3%), autonomy (90%), and helping people (90%).

**Figure 1:** The reasons for choosing dentistry as a career.

Figure 2 shows the number of recruited student in each year, while parent's occupation of participant is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 2:** Recruited student's number in each year.

**Figure 3:** Parents' occupation of recruited students.

Figure 4 show the top four reasons to choosing dentistry as a career in relation to parent's occupation.

**Figure 4:** The top four reasons to choosing dentistry as a career in relation to parent's occupation.

The comparison of top four reasons among students based on parent's occupation is shown in Table 1.

Parent's occupation/ reason	Prestigious	Self-employed	Helping People	autonomy
Doctors	30 (93.8%)	31 (96.9%)	29 (90.6%)	32 (100%)
Engineers	23 (95.8%)	23 (95.8%)	21 (87.5%)	23 (95.8%)
Business	35 (100%)	35 (100%)	32 (91.4%)	33 (94.3%)
Others	55 (93.2%)	51 (84.6%)	53 (89.8%)	47 (79.7%)
Total	143 (95.3%)	140 (93.3%)	135 (90%)	135 (90%)
Statistical analysis	$X^2 = 2.23$ $P = 0.149$	$X^2 = 3.26$ $P = 0.064$	$X^2 = 0.104$ $P = 0.519$	$X^2 = 4.52$ $P = 0.022$

**Table 1:** Comparison of top 4 reasons among students based on parent's occupation.

There was a significant difference in choosing "autonomy" as a reason in students who their parents are Doctors ( $P = 0.022$ ).

There was a significant difference in choosing "autonomy" as a reason in recruited students who their parents are doctor ( $p = 0.022$ ), and there was a significant difference also in choosing "working with own hands" as a reason in participant who their parents are doctor, engineer and business ( $p = 0.016$ ). When we subdivide the students into two groups:

- Who are in preclinical and theoretical courses (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year).
- Who are attending clinics (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year).

The comparison of top four reasons of choosing dentistry as a career and pre-clinical and clinical stage of the study of dentistry are shown in Table 2.

Clinical experience/ top reason	Prestigious	Self-employed	Helping People	Autonomy
No clinical experience	92 (95.8%)	89 (92.7%)	90 (93.8%)	85 (88.5%)
clinical experience	51 (94.4%)	51 (94.4%)	45 (83.3%)	50 (92.6%)
Total	143 (95.3%)	140 (93.3%)	135 (90%)	135 (90%)
Statistical analysis	X <sup>2</sup> = 0.15 P = 0.703	X <sup>2</sup> = 0.167 P = 1.0	X <sup>2</sup> = 4.16 P = 0.05	X <sup>2</sup> = 0.63 P = 0.57

**Table 2:** Comparison of top 4 reasons among students based on pre-clinic or clinic status.

There was a significant difference in choosing "helping people" between 2 groups ( $P = 0.05$ )

There was a significant difference in choosing "helping people" between the two groups ( $p = 0.05$ ). The recruited students who attending clinics choose "prestige" (94.4%) more than those who are not (79.2%), the difference is significant statistically ( $p = 0.017$ ). regarding "more regular hours than other professions", a similar finding was found (83.3% vs 55.2%,  $p = 0.001$ ).

Family profession, family persuasion and heard about dentistry in high school were chosen more frequently by pre-clinical students (72.9% vs 51.9%, 63.5% vs 29.6% and 58.3% vs 38.9% respectively).

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to obtain information about the reasons for choosing dentistry as a career by male students of dentistry in Ajman University. It shows that, the top four reasons for choosing dentistry as a career were "prestigious" (95.3%), "Self-employed" (93.3%), "Autonomy" (90%) and "helping people" (90%). These finding are similar to Al-Bitar findings in Jordan that 'Prestigious' was given a maximum score by the majority (44%) of the students. This differs significantly when compared with previous studies. Six per cent of dental students in the UK [8] and 0.9% in Denmark [1] agreed with the statement that a prestigious social standing was the motivation for their choice of career. Dental students in the US reported that "Prestigious" was the least important factor in their decision to study dentistry [4]. An investigation of first-year dental students in the University of Sydney in Australia found that a 'prestigious profession' ranked seventh as a motivation for choosing dentistry in those who chose dentistry as their first choice of career [11]. Scarbez and Ross [13] noted that self-employment and business- related motives were frequently cited by dental students. A study in the US found that autonomy, self-employment and working with people were the most important motives for choosing dentistry as a career [14]. Altruistic motives (helping people) were found to be important in dental students in Denmark [1] and the UK [4] and ranked second as a motivation for choosing dentistry in Australian dental students [11]. Similarly, 43.6% of dental students in Al- bitar study gave 'helping people' a maximum score as a motivating factor in their choice of a career [9]. Regarding parent's occupation, a significant difference in choosing "autonomy" as a reason in recruited students who their parents are Doctors was found ( $P = 0.022$ ). There were no significant differences in other reasons. In this study, the participants were divided into two sub categories: the students who are in Pre-clinic and theoretical course (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year). The students who are in Clinic (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year). The comparison of four top reasons among students based on pre-clinic or clinic

status, Perceptions of dental students during their course of study showed a change. The students who are in clinical status choosing "prestigious" and "more regular hours than other professions" more than pre-clinical students significantly ( $P = 0.017$ ,  $P = 0.001$ , respectively). This can be explained by a more realistic perception of the career as the students gain knowledge of the practical aspects of employment opportunities and job stresses. Similar observations were reported in a study carried out comparing accepted applicants and final year dental students in the UK [15]. The "family profession", "family persuasion" and "heard about it in high school" were choose more frequently by pre-clinic students versus 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year students.

## Conclusion

'Prestigious', self-employed', autonomy' and 'helping people' were found to be important motivating factors in this group of dental students in Ajman University. It may be a good idea to establish career education programs in schools to educate students on their career choices and employment opportunities following graduation.

## Conflict of Interest

None to declare.

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