



Career Objectives of Graduating Dental Students of Riyadh ELM University in Riyadh City an Analytical Study

Asma Almeslet^{*,†,1}, Alanoud Alsultan², Noura Althowaini³, Roba ALOraini⁴

¹Lecturer in Oral Maxillofacial Surgery and Diagnostic Sciences Department, Riyadh Elm University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

²Dental Interns, Riyadh Elm University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

³Dental Interns, Riyadh Elm University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

⁴Dental Interns, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15520/jcmro.v2i06.168>

Accepted 09-06-2019; Received 25-05-2019; Publish Online 11-06-2019

Reviewed By: DR.
KINGSLEY
AKAROWHE
Department:
Reviewer/ CMRO

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the future plans of the soon-to-be graduating students of the Riyadh Elm University (REU). A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to senior dental students in REU. Result: A total of 155 questionnaires were returned. More than half entered dental school because it is their interest (59.3%). Most of the respondents chose to join postgraduate studies after they graduate (50.9) while 25.8% chose to work as general dentist in a governmental or private practice. The most two specialties chosen equally for PG studies were prosthodontics and restorative dentistry (23.8%). United states and Saudi Arabia were the two countries mostly selected for postgraduate studies (58% and 18.4% respectively). Approximately half of the respondents plan to have their own private practice. Marriage is thought to moderately affect the future plan of the respondents (35.4%). It is concluded that most of the senior dental students will pursue PG studies after graduation. Further studies are recommended to investigate the future plans of senior dental students in REU and other dental colleges.

1 INTRODUCTION:

Dental education in the institution whereby future dental health professionals become equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the oral health needs of the patients. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, most of the graduating dentists find themselves working as general practitioners. Similar findings were reported in the United Kingdom. In a previous study, it has been shown that a majority of dental graduates in the United Kingdom would be practicing general dentistry [1].

Dental students have several objectives after their graduation. Previous study has shown that students applying to dental schools are looking for a better lifestyle through good income [2-4]. Certain earlier studies have also investigated the future plans of senior dental students in several countries [2, 3, 5, 6] [7].

In Saudi Arabia, workforce and postgraduate planning is criticized in the dental profession. Most of the graduated dentists are working in major cities. Similarly, although there is an intention towards a post graduate degree or diploma training, this may not be possible. This could possibly be owing to the fact that the right kind of motivation or direction was not given during their undergraduate years. To compound this, there are not enough postgraduate education centers that can accommodate the many applicants that exist. This is particularly important as the need for specialists in different disciplines of dentistry is growing within the Kingdom and this requirement needs to be met by an increase in the number of postgraduate dentists available.

Therefore, the *purpose* of this study is to investigate the future plans of the soon-to-be graduating students of the Riyadh Elm University (REU). Results may help the college to revise its undergraduate curriculum and program to suit a more career guided training for its graduates.

* Corresponding author.

† Email: Asma.Almeslet@riyadh.edu.sa

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Students at REU were invited to participate in this study. Participation was voluntary and their identity was left anonymous. The students who served as subjects were, at the time, studying in their final year and Intern, the questionnaires were administered during the 2nd semester of the 2018-2019 academic year.

Study proposal was submitted to the research center of Riyadh Elm University and ethical approval (Institutional Review Board IRB) was obtained. The study was registered under the registration number: FRP/2019/51

Information was derived from a self-administrated questionnaire which covered the following five areas: vision of dentistry (why they had chosen it as a career), short-term career aspirations, long-term career aspirations, influential factors on their career and personal details.

The questionnaire contained nineteen multiple choice questions that involved a mix of options with factors known to influence future professional career choices which the students rated.

The 1st part of the questionnaire included demographic details such as age, nationality, marital status, educational level and GPA. Part II focused on examining the students' 'vision' of dentistry, students were asked to identify how much they considered each of the factors to have influenced their choice of dentistry. The 'vision' section of the questionnaire explored why students perceived they had chosen dentistry as their profession.

In the latter part of the questions of Part II, there were questions pertaining to the students' intentions in joining a postgraduate program. The students who chose to join postgraduate program moved to choose onto the 3rd part of the questionnaire that involved exploring the variable factors affecting their future plan of pursuing postgraduate studies. Several details were stressed upon such as whether they had been given adequate information during their study at REU, economical factors, the field for the postgraduate program and why they had chosen it, and which country they would choose for postgraduate study and after getting their postgraduate degree whether they would become academician or clinician.

The final part of the questionnaire involved asking the students about their long term plans for their future career and the factors that would affect their decisions.

Statistical Analysis:

The questionnaires were collected. The data were entered, and a descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS program.

3 RESULTS:

A total of 155 questionnaires were completed by all participants. Summary of the participants' characteristics is shown in Table 1. Most of the respondents are single (77.4%), Saudi (86.4%). Approximately one third have a very good GPA.

Table 2 shows the opinion of participants about their dental study. More than half entered dental school because it

is their interest (59.3%) and most of them think it is a good choice (83.8%). The excellent experience in REU was reported by 27.1% of the participants while very good and good experiences were reported by 39.3% and 28.4% respectively. Most of the respondents chose to join postgraduate studies after they graduate (50.9) while 25.8% chose to work as general dentist in a governmental or private practice.

Occupational flexibility (55.4%) was the reason for choosing pursuing postgraduate studies Table 3. When asked about the specialty of interest, prosthodontics and restorative dentistry specialties were chosen equally (23.8%). Beside career advice (27.7%) and family influence (11.6%), most of the respondents chose other reasons (60.6%) for choosing the specialty of interest. United states and Saudi Arabia were the two countries mostly selected for postgraduate studies (58% and 18.4% respectively). After the completion of PG studies, most of the respondents will work as clinicians (52.9%) while 42.5% will join clinical and academician post.

The features of plans to practice dentistry in the future are shown in Table 4. Most of the participants will practice in the central region of Saudi Arabia (52.2%) because of family reasons (55.4%). Full-time or part-time work was chosen by 37.4% and 39.3% of the participants respectively. Approximately half of the respondents plan to have their own private practice. Marriage is thought to moderately affect the future plan of the respondents (35.4%).

4 DISCUSSION:

For better plans in dental education, it is important to investigate some factors that may play a role in the future dental education. In this study, we aimed to investigate senior dental students about their future plans after they graduate from REU. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the whole dental students in Saudi Arabia. A wider study investigating senior dental students in all dental colleges in Saudi Arabia may show more reliable results.

In this study, data showed that majority of senior dental students chose to study dentistry because of personal interest. Similar findings were reported by [8] [2] who reported that most of dental students investigated choose dental career. In addition, majority of participants think they made a good choice to study dentistry. This is reflected on the participants' General Point Average. Dental schools should assess the interest of students to ensure that their studies will end successfully. Similar to previous study [9] [3] [10] low number of the students regretted their choice of career.

Most of senior dental students investigated chose to join a postgraduate program after their graduation. This is in contrast to previous study [11] [12] [13] [3] which reported that most of the dental students choose to work a general dentist after graduation. This might be attributed to the facts that dental students in western countries take loans to study dentistry and they want to pay these loans. USA and Saudi Arabia were chosen by majority of respondents to study the postgraduate programs. Further studies

Table 1. Characteristics of students participated in the study (N=155)

Characteristic		Number	Percentage
Nationality	Saudi	134	86.4
	Non-Saudi	21	13.5
Marital Status	Single	120	77.4
	Married	35	22.5
Study Level	Eleven	47	30.3
	Twelve	56	36.1
	Intern	52	33.5
General Point Average	4.5 – 5	27	17.4
	3.75-4.49	57	36.7
	2.75 – 3.74	42	27
	< 2.74 or not answer	29	18.7

Table 2. Opinion of participating students about their dental study and future plan (N=155)

Question		Number	Percentage
Why did you choose to study dentistry?	Personal Interest	92	59.3
	Recommended by friend/relative	43	27.7
	Social or other reasons	20	12.9
Do you think you made a good choice	Yes	130	83.8
	No or don't know	25	16.3
How do you rate your experience in REU?	Excellent	42	27.1
	Very good	61	39.3
	Good with difficulty	44	28.4
	Do not know	8	5.2
Plan after graduation	GP in government or private practice	40	25.8
	Join dental school as teaching staff	15	9.6
	Not yet decided	21	13.5
	Join post-graduate program	79	50.9

Table 3. Factors related to participants chose to join postgraduate program (N=155)

Question			%
For PG choice, factors affecting your plan	Occupational flexibility	86	55.4
	Income	44	28.3
	Interest and other factors	25	16.1
	Prosthodontics	37	23.8
Specialty of interest	Restorative Dentistry	37	23.8
	Orthodontics	24	15.4
	Oral surgery	21	13.5
	Endodontics	17	10.9
	Pediatric Dentistry	12	7.4
What makes you choose the specialty	Oral medicine/Community Dentistry	7	4.5
	Career advice (friends, dentists..)	43	27.7
	Influence of family/income	18	11.6
Information during undergraduate study makes your decision?	Other reasons	94	60.6
	Yes	81	52.2
Country you plan to pursue PG study in	No	49	31.6
	Do not know	25	16.1
	USA	90	58
Plan after PG Study	Saudi Arabia	29	18.7
	United Kingdom	21	13.5
	Arabian or other countries	15	9.6
	Clinician	82	52.9
	Academician and Clinician	66	42.5
	Not yet decided	7	4.5

Table 4. . Features of plans to practice dentistry in the future (N=155)

Question			%
Which area of Saudi Arabia you plan to practice in?	Central Region	81	52.2
	Eastern Region	25	16.1
	Western region	13	8.3
	Southern region/not yet decided	36	23.2
Reason for choosing the region?	Family reason	86	55.4
	High need region	34	21.9
	Better work opportunity	27	17.4
Future plan working time	Friends in the area/career opportunity	8	5.1
	Full-time	58	37.4
	Part-Time	61	39.3
Plan to have private clinic	Not yet decided	36	23.2
	Yes	75	48.3
	No	38	24.5
How much marriage will affect your future plan?	Not yet decided	42	27.0
	Dramatically	21	13.5
	Moderately	55	35.4
	Slightly	32	20.6
	No answer/not at all	47	31.3

should be conducted to investigate the reasons behind this choice. Prosthodontics and restorative dentistry were chosen the specialties mostly selected by participants to pursue postgraduate education. This disagrees with previous study by [14] who reported that orthodontics and oral surgery were the two mostly specialties selected by senior dental students. It is only possible to speculate the reasons for this difference which is the exposure of students to courses and patients in these two specialties. This speculation is shown in the participants' response when asked about what makes them to choose the specialty. In agreement with previous study [14], low number of senior dental students investigated will join academic career. Previous study had shown that academic career is related to the presence of one parent who is academician [13] [7].

Family reason was the factor mostly cited by participants to choose the region where they plan to practice. This is not seen in previous studies [16] [17]. Less than half of the respondents plan to work as full time which disagrees with previous studies [15] [14]. It is speculated that at this may be related to the facts that participants need more time and experience as shown by the high percentage of participants who answered "I do not know". It is suggested that senior dental students should receive more seminars in dental practice. It may be beneficial to question participants the same questions after them finish their internship program. Furthermore, family influence on future plans of senior dental students has been investigated in several studies [14] [3] [18]. In agreement with these studies, data from this study showed that marriage may affect the future plan of participants.

5 CONCLUSIONS:

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that: Most of senior dental students in REU will pursue PG studies after their graduation. Prosthodontics and restorative dentistry are the most specialties selected for PG educa-

tion. Family influence plays a role in the future plans of senior dental students in REU.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that: REU should conduct seminars about future career planning of its graduates. More studies including other dental colleges should be conducted. More studies to investigate possible reasons for the findings should be conducted.

REFERENCES

- [1] Whitehead AW, Novak KF, Close JM. Identification of factors influencing matriculation decisions by dental school applicants. *J Dent Educ*;2002:66–1.
- [2] Stewart FM, Drummond JR, Carson L, Hoad Reddick G. The future of the profession—a survey of dental school applicants. *Br Dent J*;197:569–573.
- [3] dental students' career intentions, work-life balance and retirement plans. *Br Dent J*;203:257–63.
- [4] Davies L, Thomas DR, Sandham SJ, Treasure ET, Chestnutt IG. Factors influencing the career aspirations and preferred modes of working in recent dental graduates in Wales. *Prim Dent Care*; 2008.
- [5] Skelly AM, Fleming GJ. Perceptions of a dental career among successful applicants for dentistry compared with those of fifth-year dental students. *Prim Dent Care*;
- [6] Aoyagi K, Agholme MB, Dahllöf G. Career choice and attitudes towards dental education amongst dental students in Japan and Sweden. *Eur J Dent Educ*;2009(13):80–86.
- [7] J WNG. Understanding the motivation: a qualitative study of dental students' choice of professional career. *Eur J Dent Educ*;12:89–98.
- [8] HT GDN. Workforce planning in dentistry: the impact of shorter and more varied career patters. *Comm Dent Health*. 2001;18:236–241.
- [9] Price SS. The profile of women dentists. *J Am Dent Assoc*. 1990;120:403–408.
- [10] R, Wilson NH. The emerging dental workforce: long-term career expectations and influences. A quantitative study of final year dental students' views on their long-term career from one London Dental School. *BMC Oral Health*;9:35.

- [11] Truter M, Ligthelm AJ. Working patterns of male and female dentists in. *De Wet*. 1997;52:15–17.
- [12] M, Rennie JS. Careers and patterns of work of Scottish dental graduates”1991 and. vol. 185. *Br Dent J*; 1994. p. 238–243.
- [13] Rupp JK, Jones DL, Seale NS. Dental students’ knowledge about careers in academic dentistry. vol. 70. *J Dent Edu*; 2006.
- [14] FM CLS. Hoad Reddick G. A survey of dental school applicants’ career intentions and the balance with family life. vol. 11. *Br Dent*; 2005.
- [15] Newton T, Thorgood N, Gibbons DE. The work patterns of male and female dental practitioners in the United Kingdom. *Int Dent J*. 2000;50:61–68.
- [16] Brennam DS, Spencer AJ, Szuster FSP. Differences in time devoted to practice. vol. 172. *Br Dent J*; 1992. p. 348–349.
- [17] patterns of male and female dentists in the UK. Matthews RW, Scully C Working. 1994;176:463–466.
- [18] Leggate M. Dentists in general and community practice: a Scottish survey. *Russell*;193:333–337.

