

# Reason for Choosing Pediatric Dentistry as Career – Survey Among Post-graduate Dental Students

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The aim of the study was to compare the reason for choosing pediatric dentistry as a professional career.

**Materials and Method:** The study comprised of Survey among Post Graduate student of speciality of pediatric and preventive dentistry in which candidates were asked to score the influence of factors like parental background, personnel reasons, professional reasons, vocational reasons, economic reasons; by using a questionnaire through Email. The data was recollected and analyzed.

**Results:** The overall response rate was 70 % and among them 96.4% indicated pediatric dentistry was their 1st career choice. Reasons included higher parental education, awareness and financial stability; own interest, inspiration from teachers/family dentist; future prospective of speciality; and financial viability.

**Conclusion:** It was concluded that Parental education, awareness and financial stability motivated the child to choose a career of student's own interest and demand of speciality while vocational and economic reasons creating a platform of feasibility.

**Keywords:** Choosing career, Pediatric Dentistry, Professional reasons, Medical Background

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## INTRODUCTION

The choice of a career is a critical decision that has an obvious impact on a future life pattern. Dentistry is among the sought after professions in present day scenario. Dentists occupy an important position in society as licensed health care workers (1).

There are economic factors which may influence an individual's level of commitment to the profession. Also of interest is the extent to which societal changes influence the choice of speciality in dentistry (2).

It is important to understand the priorities and sociodemographic backgrounds of those choosing to study Pediatric Dentistry(3).

After graduation, Dental surgeon faces a choice to pursue master's degree (MDS) in one of many specialties of dentistry. The students are confounded and perplexed by the choices available and the ultimate decision of choosing a speciality depends on interplay of various factors.

One of the specialties of choice is Pediatric Dentistry. It deals with children and their job involves diagnosing, preventing and treating all aspects of oral diseases in children. Pediatric Dentists thus improve public oral health and inculcate the feeling of importance of dental care among children which they carry forward to adulthood and contributing towards building up of a healthy nation.

A Previous survey on motives for choosing dentistry as a career revealed that prospective students have a number of distinctive characteristics (4). It showed that many individuals find themselves in occupations not really knowing why they were propelled in that particular direction. A similar predicament is faced by graduates on completion of B.D.S.

In general, parents, relatives, friends, teachers and counselors effect the student's decision in choosing a career. Economic factors may also influence an individual level of commitment to the profession (5).

A study among South African students revealed that status and financial security appeared to be most relevant factors (6, 7).

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**Table 1: Parental Reasons for choosing Pediatric Dentistry As A career**

Choice of speciality suggested by parents	Frequency		Education status of father			Education status of mother			Medical/dental background		Annual income		
			P.G.	U.G.	S.S.	P.G.	U.G.	S.S.	YES	NO	<1lac	1-5lac	>5 lac
		%											
Pedodontics	235	66.1	44.6	48.9	6.3	23.4	36.1	40.4	72.3	27.6	25.5	44.6	29.7
Endodontics	15	4.2	33.3	66.6	0	33.3	0	66.6	66.6	33.3	0	100	0
Prosthodontics	5	1.4	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	0	100
Periodontics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oral Medicine	10	2.8	100	0	0	100	0	0	0	100	0	0	100
Oral surgery	45	12.6	33.3	44.4	22.2	11.1	22.2	66.6	88.8	11.1	44.4	44.4	11.1
Oral Pathology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Orthodontics	30	8.4	50	50	0	33.3	50	16.6	100	0	0	50	50
CommunityDentistry	10	2.8	0	100	0	0	100	0	100	100	0	0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>												

Interest also plays an important role in choosing the career which decides the extent to which societal changes influence the choice of pediatric dentistry. Some make decision by taking the path of least resistance like following a career path advocated by their parents or following in footsteps of an elder sibling (7, 8).

Motives for entering the dental profession have been studied periodically by dental educators. Recent evidence suggests that dentist school enrollment may be entering period of decline, following period of significant increase throughout the early mid 1990's (5). Such studies would help in better understanding of student's reasons for choosing pediatric dentistry profession may facilitates in knowing the changing trends in Dental post graduate course.

There are many studies which have been done on choosing dentistry as a career but extensive literature search revealed lack of such studies/data on reasons for pursuing Pediatric Dentistry as Career.

The aim of the study was to compare the reason for choosing pediatric dentistry as a

professional career amongst post graduate dental students pursuing M.D.S. in pediatric and preventive dentistry.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Sample design

505 postgraduate students pursuing M.D.S. in the speciality of Pediatric and Preventive dentistry in all the Government and Private institutions in India were chosen for the study.

### Questionnaire design

A questionnaire of 22 items classified in five groups of reasons was made in English Language .It was designed to assess the reasons for choosing pediatric dentistry as a career among postgraduate dental students pursuing M.D.S. in the speciality of pediatric dentistry.

The questionnaire was also pre tested before study. It took about 10 minutes to present and fill the questionnaire. The ethical approval was taken from the ethical committee.

### Survey procedure

505 questionnaires were distributed

among the samples through emails and subsequently all the samples were recollected and analyzed. The questions were designed in accordance with the factors affecting the decision of the student's like- Parental background, personnel reasons, professional reasons, vocational reasons, and economic factors.

### Statistical methods

The data was converted to the spreadsheet and were fed to the Analytical Software. The frequency and percentage Tables were made using the SPSS software version 15 (Chicago Inc.).

## RESULTS

The overall response rate was 70 %. The parents of postgraduate students tend towards higher level of education. Almost 48.9 % fathers and 36.1 % of mothers of postgraduate student were having graduation level of education and 44.6% fathers and 23.4 % mothers were having post graduation level of education. 22.9% of parents were from medical or dental background. Annual income of the family for 44.9% were in between 1 to 5 lac , 22.6% had an annual income of less than 1 lac and 32.5% had an annual income of more than 5 lac per annum (Table 1).

54.8% of the parents were aware of the speciality. 71.2% were willing to spend more money for the speciality. In respect to the specialties, suggested by parents themselves, 66.1% suggested pediatric dentistry as the speciality, 4.2% suggested (Table 1) Endodontics as speciality, 1.4% suggested Prosthodontics as speciality,

**Table 2: Personal Reasons for choosing Pediatric Dentistry As A career**

Personal Reasons		Frequency	Percent
Career of interest	Yes	335	94.6
Inspired by some pediatric dentist	Yes	95	26.8
Pursued MDS with no specific choice of speciality	Yes	114	32.2
Inspired by your teacher	Yes	145	41.0
Inspired by family dentist	Yes	65	18.4
This specialty is rewarding emotionally / socially or financially	Yes	310	87.6
No other choice left	Yes	104	29.4

2.8% suggested oral medicine and community dentistry as the speciality, 12.6% suggested oral surgery as speciality, 8.4% suggested orthodontics as speciality and periodontics and oral pathology was suggested by none.

In response to questions on the personal reasons (Table 2) for choosing pediatric dentistry as a career, 94.6% responded that it's a career of interest. Whether the choice of the speciality was influenced by any pediatric dentist, 73.2% responded in negative. In response to whether the choice of pediatric dentistry is just for pursuing M.D.S. rather than being a speciality, 67.8% responded in negative.

In response to whether the choice of pediatric dentistry was inspired by teacher, 59% responded in negative. 18.4% attributed the choice of the speciality to the family dentist where as 81.6% replied in negative. Whether the speciality is rewarding emotionally/ socially, 87.6% responded in positive. In response to whether they chose the speciality as no other choice were left, 70.6% responded negatively and 29.4% responded positively.

In response to questions on the professional reasons of choosing pediatric dentistry as speciality, 65% agreed that it makes an easy way of employment. In response to whether this speciality is all speciality in one branch 94.4% responded positively and 5.6% responded negatively. But on whether speciality pays better than

other branch, 61.9% responded negative. (Table 3)

On the basis of vocational reasons 98.6 % students like the speciality for its challenging nature and 96% agreed to the fact that they like interaction with children. Reason for choosing this speciality on economic grounds, 35.3% considered Pediatric dentistry to be a better financial viability than other branches in dentistry. (Table 4)

**DISCUSSION**

The rationale of the present study was to obtain information about the reasons that a postgraduate student had in choosing pediatric dentistry as a career. The approximate number of individuals being admitted to the branch of Pediatric and Preventive dentistry ranges from 500-550 per year (9).

The study population comprised of first to final year postgraduate students in the speciality of Pediatric and Preventive dentistry in India.

The admission of the perspective student to the speciality is based on different methods

- The results of pre-postgraduate entrance test in government colleges
- The results of pre-postgraduate entrance test in private college

The idea of having different admission approaches is to guarantee the access of any student in accordance to his parental,

personnel, professional, vocational and economic background.

This brief description could help to characterize the type of students admitted into the speciality of pediatric and preventive dentistry. In fact, differences in the motives to choose dentistry as a professional career between Indian postgraduate dental institutions could exist because not all the postgraduate dental institutions around the country use the same methods.

Brand and Chitke (10) have previously established two important comments about methodology to assess self-reported reasons. The first is that although any behaviour is observable, reasons that impel that behaviour are hidden and often beyond the level of awareness. This implies that reasons could only be inferred, at best, as behaviours that are observed. The second point is that whilst behaviour may appear simple and uncomplicated, the underlying motivation may be complex, unique and idiosyncratic; and its meaning is often beyond reach of those who are trying to interpret and understand it.

The problem is further complicated by the scarcity of objective measures to evaluate reasons, for which the researcher is ultimately forced to rely on a subjective and intuitive approach to interpret them. This implies that the meaning of reasons that account for a complex set of behaviours such as choosing a profession may be difficult to discover.

Small number of items is an important characteristic of any self-administered instrument, to avoid fatigue in those completing the questionnaire. In addition, fewer items permit a simpler statistical analysis of the responses.

As with many other events in daily life, the choice of a professional career could be considered a multifactor decision, in which several judges interact simultaneously. Zadik et al (11) have reported that in all prospect, most individuals do not hold to one crucial justification, but consider and act on the sum total of reasons and alternatives in the decision-making process. According to this, all items were organised

**Table 3: Professional Reasons for choosing Pediatric Dentistry As A career**

Professional reasons		Frequency	Percentage
Easy employment	Yes	230	65.0
Diversity of clinical work	Yes	334	94.4
Pays better than other branches	Yes	135	38.1

**Table 4: Vocational and Economic Reasons for choosing Pediatric Dentistry As A career**

Reasons		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Vocational</b>			
Challenging job	Yes	349	98.6
Like interaction with children	Yes	340	96
<b>Economic</b>			
Better financial viability	Yes	125	35.3

irrespective to gender. In doing so, differences between genders were minimized and became easier to detect. Parental reasons for choosing pediatric dentistry as a career:

The parents of postgraduate students were highly educated. Almost 91.5% fathers and 58.7% mothers were having the postsecondary education (Table 1). They were themselves inclined towards having higher education, thus showing influence over postgraduates in pursuing specialization in professional degree course. Almost 60-70% of parents of postgraduates who had taken clinical speciality were having medical/dental background while the data is vice-versa for the postgraduates who had chosen non-clinical speciality.

Majority of parents of postgraduates who had taken admission in various specialties were from middle income group which gives an inference that money may not be a major factor in deciding which speciality to opt for and moreover their financial status enabled the aspirant to choose their favorite branch. As it is generally observed that parents with Medical/dental background tends to motivate their children to pursue career in Medical/dental speciality and moreover incline in choosing clinical speciality.

### Personal Reasons for choosing pediatric dentistry as a career:

94.6% of postgraduates had chosen this speciality out of their own career interest. This gives an idea that the main reason of choosing post graduation course is their own interest which may have developed over a period of time (Table 2). However additional reasons also contribute such as:- About 87.6% of the postgraduates opted for a particular speciality because they felt that speciality is emotionally/socially and financially rewarding.

About 32.2% of postgraduates pursued MDS with no specific choice of speciality. 41% had been inspired by family dentists. About 29.4% of the postgraduates chose their speciality because they had no other choice left and 26.8% of postgraduates had been inspired by some pediatric dentist.

### Professional Reasons for choosing Pediatric Dentistry As A career:

Pediatric dentistry is also a favorite branch as it seems to be an easy employment factor and diversity of clinical work which makes a student learn all the work in dentistry under one roof with additional advantage of learning child psychology. In our study we found out that 94.4% of postgraduates chose this speciality because of diversity of clinical work, 65% of postgraduates chose Pediatric Dentistry for easy employment in future, and 38.1% of them chose this branch because they felt that this branch pays better than other branches (Table 3). The above reasons give the inference that majority of the postgraduates chose this branch as a career as they were inclined in doing clinical work which included all aspects of different specialties and which led them to easy employment in future.

### Vocational Reasons for choosing Pediatric Dentistry As A career

98.6 % of postgraduates chose Pediatric Dentistry because they felt that it was a challenging job and 96% chose it as a career because they liked interaction with children (Table 4). This gives the inference that they chose this branch as it is a challenging job of handling kids which improve their personality and help them to make a good human being and some also perused because of their liking for children.

### Economic Reasons for choosing Pediatric Dentistry As A career

35.3% of postgraduates chose Pediatric Dentistry as their career for better financial viability and easy way of living. They thought this speciality will give them a better economic setup in their life (Table 5). Thus it can be inferred that the percentage of postgraduates having such thoughts were less than 50% and more than 50% had taken up the speciality because of some other reasons rather than the economic gains.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the above results, it was concluded that the reasons to choose pediatric and preventive dentistry as a professional career were different for people with different parental, professional, economic, personnel and vocational background.

Education of parents, their awareness and financial stability motivated the child to choose a career of his own interest.

Personnel reason played a lead role although it was a cluster of influences which child received in various time frames of life. Professional reasons like employment status demand of particular career stream and interesting work also inclined the aspirant towards particular field. Vocational and economic factors worked in accordance with the above factors and created a platform of feasibility in guiding the student in choosing a career.

Thus choosing a career was rather a complicated, unique and idiosyncratic in nature which made it quite difficult to understand and interpret.

As this piece of work is a kind of pioneer study in the postgraduate level, further work for the other speciality is recommended to understand the behavior of motivation in choosing career in postgraduate speciality in dentistry.

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