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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEPTION ABOUT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH DENTISTRY AMONG POST GRADUATE STUDENTS IN BANGALORE CITY: A CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Aims: To assess the perception about career opportunities in public health dentistry among post graduate students. **Settings and Design:** A cross sectional survey was carried out in the Department of public health dentistry among the post graduate students in the Dental Institutions in Bangalore city. **Methods and Material:** The survey was carried out using self-structured, pre-tested, close-ended questionnaire administered to 79 Post Graduate students which included written consent to participate in the study, demographic details & questions pertaining to perception about career opportunities which were 12 in number. **Statistical analysis used:** Chi-Square test was done for categorical variables using SPSS version 22. **Results:** In the present study, majority of the Post Graduate Students perceived that they have a role in clinical procedure, health education at clinical level, to train other health professionals, regarding oral health, to provide oral health information at media level, planning & evaluation of public health programs and role of Public Health Dentist at school whereas, only a few were unaware that they have a role to play in teledentistry, fiscal measures, advocacy and lobbying. **Conclusions:** The specialty needs to be projected well among post graduate students to increase their interest in the discipline as an attractive and viable career option.

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INTRODUCTION

Health is dynamic, an ever-changing concept. The social, mental, philosophical aspects make health a platform of change and requires a lot of professional and policy level action (Scope of Master's in Public Health in India, 2018). Health professionals play a central and critical role in improving access and quality health care for the population (Health professions networks, 2018). In recent decades, there has been great emphasis on the responsibility of health care professionals, including dentists and doctors, to protect and enhance the health of the general public (Dastjerdi, 2012). Public health programs are designed to prepare health professionals who will, over time, improve the capacity of the health care system to address the health needs of minority and disadvantaged population (Khanagar, 2014). Public health dentistry reflects an emerging discipline with the potential to create a competent and effective public health workforce, contributing significantly towards the delivery of essential public health services.

However, there is a need to create career opportunities and a structured career advancement plan for Public Health Professionals for entry into public and private health roles (Sharma, 2013). Knowledge of dental students' expectations of their profession as well as their attitudes to study a particular specialty of dentistry is of great importance. These attitudes and expectations make studying dentistry meaningful for dental students and society and understanding these factors facilitate workforce planning in the dental sector (Sharma, 2016). Therefore, the speciality needs to be projected well among post graduate students to increase their interest in the discipline as an attractive and viable career option. In a developing country like India where, oral health awareness is limited and disease burden is high, a speciality like Dental Public Health dedicated toward working for the masses becomes more important. The aim of the study was to assess the perception about career opportunities in public health dentistry among post graduate students in Bangalore city.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

A cross sectional survey was carried out to assess the perception about career opportunities among the post graduate students in the Department of Public Health Dentistry in the

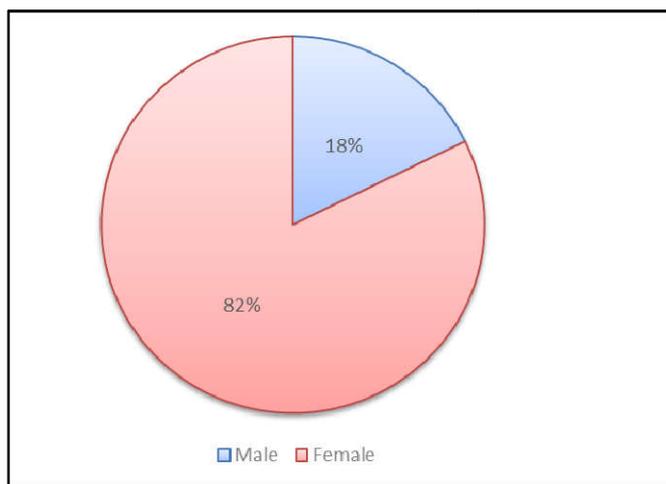
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dental institutions in Bangalore city. A total of 79 post graduate students participated in the study. The inclusion criteria included all the dental colleges with PG program in the speciality of Public Health Dentistry and all the Post Graduate students who gave written informed consent to participate in the study. A self-structured, pre-tested, close-ended questionnaire was administered to the PG students which included written consent to participate in the study, demographic details & questions pertaining to perception about career opportunities which were 12 in number. A pilot study was conducted to check the feasibility and also to validate the questionnaire.

Face validity of the questionnaire was checked with the help of experts in the Department of Public health Dentistry while content validity was checked by ensuring that the questions covered all the areas of perception mapped out by initial objective. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by using Cronbach’s α and it was found to be 0.8 (acceptable). The study was carried out for the duration of one month in October, 2017. The study proposal was approved by institutional review board of Vydehi Institute of Dental Sciences and Research Centre, Bangalore. Before conducting the survey, permissions were obtained from the Principals and the Heads of the department of Public Health Dentistry of the 14 dental institutions included in the study. The investigator personally visited the dental institutions and administered the questionnaire to the participants. Chi-Square test was done for categorical variables using SPSS version 22.

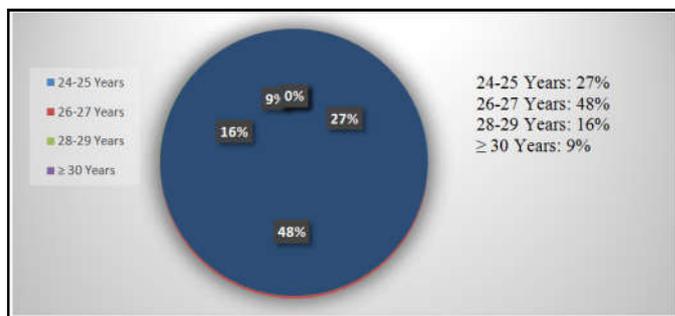
RESULTS

The present study was conducted to assess the perception about career opportunities among post graduate students in the speciality of public health dentistry in Bangalore city. A total of 79 post graduate students participated in the study. Among the 79 participants, 14 i.e., 18% were male and 65 i.e., 82% were female (Graph 1).

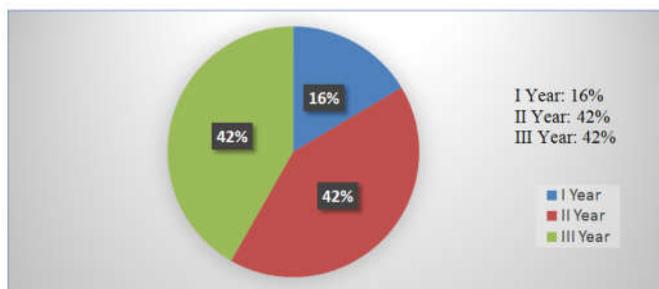


Graph 1. Distribution of study subjects based on the Gender

Out of the 79 participants, 21 i.e., 27% participants were of 24 - 25 years of age, 38 i.e., 48% participants were 26 - 27 years old, 13 i.e., 16% participants belonged to the age group of 28 - 29 years and 7 i.e., 9% participants were in the age group of \geq 30 years (Graph 2). Among the 79 participants, 13 i.e., 16% were in first year MDS, 33 i.e., 42% were in the second year MDS and 33 i.e., 42% were in the third year MDS (Graph 3).

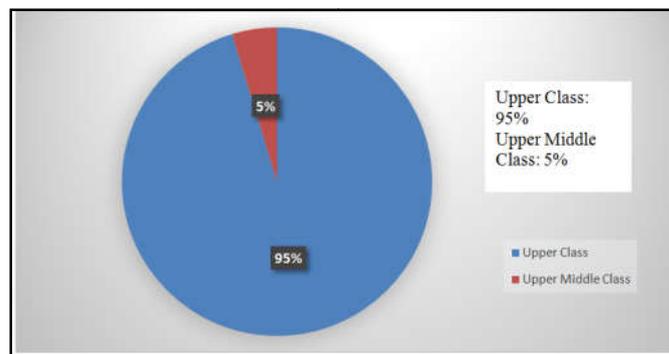


Graph 2. Distribution of study subjects based on the Age



Graph 3. Distribution of study subjects based on year of the study

The Socioeconomic status of the participants was measured using Kuppaswamy’s socioeconomic status scale 2017 version, and it was found that 14 i.e., 18% belonged to Upper Middle Class and 65 i.e., 82% belonged to Upper Class (Graph 4).



Graph 4. Distribution of study subjects based on the socioeconomic status

Perception about career opportunities among 79 Post graduate students was assessed using a 12-item questionnaire. The response rate of the participants was 100%. The responses for the questions were categorized into three categories namely Agree, Disagree and Don’t know. The results for the relationship between the question, “Role of Public Health dentists in teledentistry to provide basic information about oral disease and its prevention” and the socioeconomic status (Upper class = 18%, Upper Middle Class = 82%) of the participants, were found to be significant with Chi-square value of 5.124, at p value 0.02 (Table 1). The results for the relationship between the question, “Role of Public Health Dentist as research analyst at IT companies or Pharmaceutical companies” and year of the study (First Year MDS = 16%, second year MDS = 42% and third year MDS = 42%) of the participants, were found to be very highly significant with Chi-Square value of 22.60 at p value of 0.00 (Table 2). The results for the relationship between socioeconomic status (Upper class = 18%, Upper Middle Class = 82%) and year of the study (First Year MDS = 16%, second year MDS = 42% and third

Table 1. Relationship between role of Public Health Dentist in teledentistry, fiscal measures, advocacy and lobbying with socioeconomic Status

Question	n (percent)	Chi Square value	p value
Q7: Public Health dentists have a role to play in Teledentistry to provide basic information about oral disease and its prevention.	79 (100%)	5.124	0.02*
Q10: Public Health Dentists should be taken into account while preparing Fiscal measures related to Oral health.	79 (100%)	12.527	0.002***
Q11: Public Health Dentist should play a role in Advocacy and Lobbying related to Oral health	79 (100%)	4.640	0.031*

p-value: * Significant, ***Very Highly significant

Table 2. Relationship between role of public health dentist in IT companies, fiscal measures, advocacy and lobbying with year of the study

Question	n(percent)	Chi-square value	p value
Q9: Being a Public Health Dentist, we do have a role as research analyst at IT companies or Pharmaceutical Companies.	79(100%)	22.600	0.00***
Q10: Public Health Dentists should be taken into account while preparing Fiscal measures related to Oral health.	79(100%)	13.17	0.010**
Q11: Public Health Dentist should play a role in Advocacy and Lobbying related to Oral health	79(100%)	19.383	0.00***

p-value: **Highly significant, ***Very Highly significant

year MDS = 42%) of the participants with the question “Public Health Dentists should be taken into account while preparing Fiscal measures related to oral health” were found to be highly significant with Chi-Square value 12.527, 13.17, and p value 0.002, 0.010 (Table 1 & 2). The results for the relationship between socioeconomic status (Upper class = 18%, Upper Middle Class = 82%) and year of the study (First Year MDS = 16%, second year MDS = 42% and third year MDS = 42%) of the participants with the question “Public Health Dentist should play a role in Advocacy and Lobbying related to oral health” were found to be highly significant with Chi-square value of, 4.640, 19.383 and p value of 0.031, 0.00 respectively. (Table 1 & 2).

DISCUSSION

The speciality of dentistry has been expanding in scope and complexity with more emphasis being placed on the healthcare delivery system and its impact on oral health status of the populations. Efficient functioning of a meaningful and balanced oral health care delivery system requires specialists from all aspects and disciplines of dentistry. Among the various disciplines in dentistry, Public Health Dentistry, forms the basis for oral health care services as it holds the key for developing awareness on the social aspects of the profession and the responsibility toward community (Sharma, 2016). The present cross-sectional survey was conducted to assess the perception about career opportunities in public health dentistry among post graduate students in Bangalore city. The process of networking, sharing digital information, distant consultations, workup, and analysis is dealt with by a segment of the science of telemedicine concerned with dentistry known as “Teledentistry” (Jampani, 2011). Prevention and early detection of any carious lesion or a soft tissue lesion is possible through teledentistry (Boringi, 2015). The results for the relationship between the question, “Role of Public Health dentists in Teledentistry to provide basic information about oral disease and its prevention” and the socioeconomic status of the participants, were found to be significant. Researchers in the field of public health gather and analyze data on health trends within a certain locality in an effort to educate the general public on health promotion. The findings and education programs compiled by public health researchers often influence health care policies and regulations and public health education (<http://work.chron.com/jobdescription-researcher-field-public-health-26439.html>).

The results for the relationship between the question, “Role of Public Health Dentist as research analyst at IT companies or Pharmaceutical Companies” and the year of study of the participants, were found to be very highly significant. Fiscal policy is the means by which a government adjusts its spending levels and tax rates to monitor and influence a nation's economy (<https://www.investopedia.com/insights/what-isfiscal-policy>). The instruments of government for this purpose are taxes and subsidies, and direct provision of certain health services for free or at subsidized rates (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK11714>). The results for the relationship between year of the study and the socioeconomic status of the participants with the question “Public Health Dentists should be taken into account while preparing fiscal measures related to oral health” were found to be highly significant. Advocacy and lobbying are recognized as part of a health professional's role. They are effective ways to work for public policy reform. Health professionals can act as advocates and lobbyists themselves or encourage and support other community members to take up advocacy and lobbying (Fernandes, 2016). The results for the relationship between year of the study and socioeconomic status of the participants with the question, “Public Health Dentist should play a role in Advocacy and Lobbying related to oral health” were found to be highly significant.

Since, it is a pioneer study and there is paucity of literature, comparison could not be done with other studies. Further studies have to be conducted which opens new vistas for the topic.

The limitations of the study include:

- 1) As the study was conducted among the post graduate students in public health dentistry department in one city, the results cannot be generalized to the entire post graduate students in India, the sample size has to be scientifically calculated in future studies.
- 2) The cross-sectional nature of the study, which assesses both the cause and effect/outcome at the same time.

Recommendation

Further studies should be conducted among Public Health Specialists to confirm the findings of the study and also to get a broader perspective on the issue.

Conclusion

In the present study, majority of the post graduate students perceived that they have a role in clinical procedure, health education, planning and evaluation whereas, only few were unaware that they have a role in teledentistry, fiscal measures, advocacy and lobbying. The speciality needs to be projected well among post graduate students to increase their interest in the discipline as an attractive and viable career option.

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