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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS CAREER OPTION AFTER BDS AMONGST INTERNEES IN WEST BENGAL : AN ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

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Abstract

Introduction: A Graduate's career is the course of action they pursue to fulfill their intended employment. The journey from the hallowed halls of dental education to the dynamic realm of professional practice marks a critical juncture in the lives of dental internees. As these individuals transition from the theoretical foundations of their Bachelor of Dental Surgery education to the practical landscape of dentistry, their knowledge and attitudes towards career options become pivotal. Apart from traditional career paths such as private dental practice or working in hospitals there are several alternative and less-known career options that BDS graduates can explore which are yet to be saturated. Before choosing any alternative career path, it's essential for BDS graduates to gain additional qualifications or certifications, if required, and network with professionals in their chosen field of interest, for which a tailored support system and guidance program is essential. This study endeavours to explore the multifaceted aspects of the knowledge and attitudes held by dental internees in West Bengal, India, concerning their career choices post-BDS.

Objective: To assess the knowledge and attitude toward career option after BDS amongst internees in west Bengal.

Material And Method: The study will be conducted among 200 Internees from various dental colleges across West Bengal. For the study a standardized Questionnaire consisting of 12 questions will be formulated in Google Form format and link will be circulated to the Participants.

Statistical Analysis: The statistics was generated by Google Forms and tabulated accordingly.

Conclusion: By giving students the information and tools they require to make wise career decisions, we can produce a new heneration of

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dental professionals who are not only clinically skilled but also well-suited to succeed in a variety of professional environments.

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Introduction:-

Career is the action taken by the aspiring graduates to achieve the desired goal by occupation.¹ The journey from the hallowed halls of dental education to the dynamic realm of professional practice marks a critical juncture in the lives of dental internees. As these individuals transition from the theoretical foundations of their Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) education to the practical landscape of dentistry, their knowledge and attitudes towards career options become pivotal. This study endeavours to explore the multifaceted aspects of the knowledge and attitudes held by dental internees in West Bengal, India, concerning their career choices post-BDS.

One of the most important decisions one will ever make is choosing career option. Understanding the knowledge and attitudes of dental internees at this point of time is vital not only for the individual practitioners but also for the broader healthcare system. The choices made during this critical phase can have far-reaching implications for the quality of dental care provided and the professional satisfaction of these practitioners. By focusing on West Bengal, this study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by providing insights that are specifically tailored to the cultural and regional intricacies of the state.

Dentist plays an important role in society as a professional healthcare worker.² Dental and medical courses are difficult, and depression is popular among students of these courses, thereby affecting the students' attitude toward further study.³ The accelerated increase in the number of graduating students with limited number of post graduate seats and dental job opportunities have further created intense pressure on dental graduates. So, the awareness about various career options after bachelor of dental surgery (BDS) plays an important role in achieving professional security. The intricacies of clinical practice, considerations of specialization, financial implications, and the influence of regional factors all contribute to the complexity of their decision-making process. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is essential for developing targeted support mechanisms that facilitate a seamless transition and promote informed and successful career choices. The role of learning is recognized in this step because of its significance in ensuring professional skills, effective patient care and career progress.

It is very important for emerging dentists to be aware of the different career options available as this would help minimize the pressure of excellence in clinical practice and saturation in the dental field. Apart from traditional career paths such as private dental practice or working in hospitals there are several alternative and less-known career options that BDS graduates can explore which are yet to be saturated. Before choosing any alternative career path, it's essential for BDS graduates to gain additional qualifications or certifications, if required, and network with professionals in their chosen field of interest, for which a tailored support system and guidance program is essential. Additionally, staying updated on the latest developments in dentistry and related fields is crucial for success in these alternative careers.

Therefore, by examining the knowledge base and attitudes of internees the study contributes to address concerns of dental graduates, ultimately contributing to the improvement of career guidance programs and support systems, thereby fostering a holistic understanding of the career landscape for a successful dental career.

Material and Method:-

The study was conducted among 200 Internees across dental colleges in West Bengal. For the study a standardized and validated Questionnaire consisting of 12 questions was formulated and subjected to peer review . After the clearance from Institutional Ethics Committee (GNIDSR/IEC/2024/53) the link of the questionnaire in Google Form format was circulated to the participants . Inclusion criteria: Students undergoing Compulsory Rotatory Internship in various colleges across state of West Bengal. (2023-24). The study was conducted for a time period of 20 days

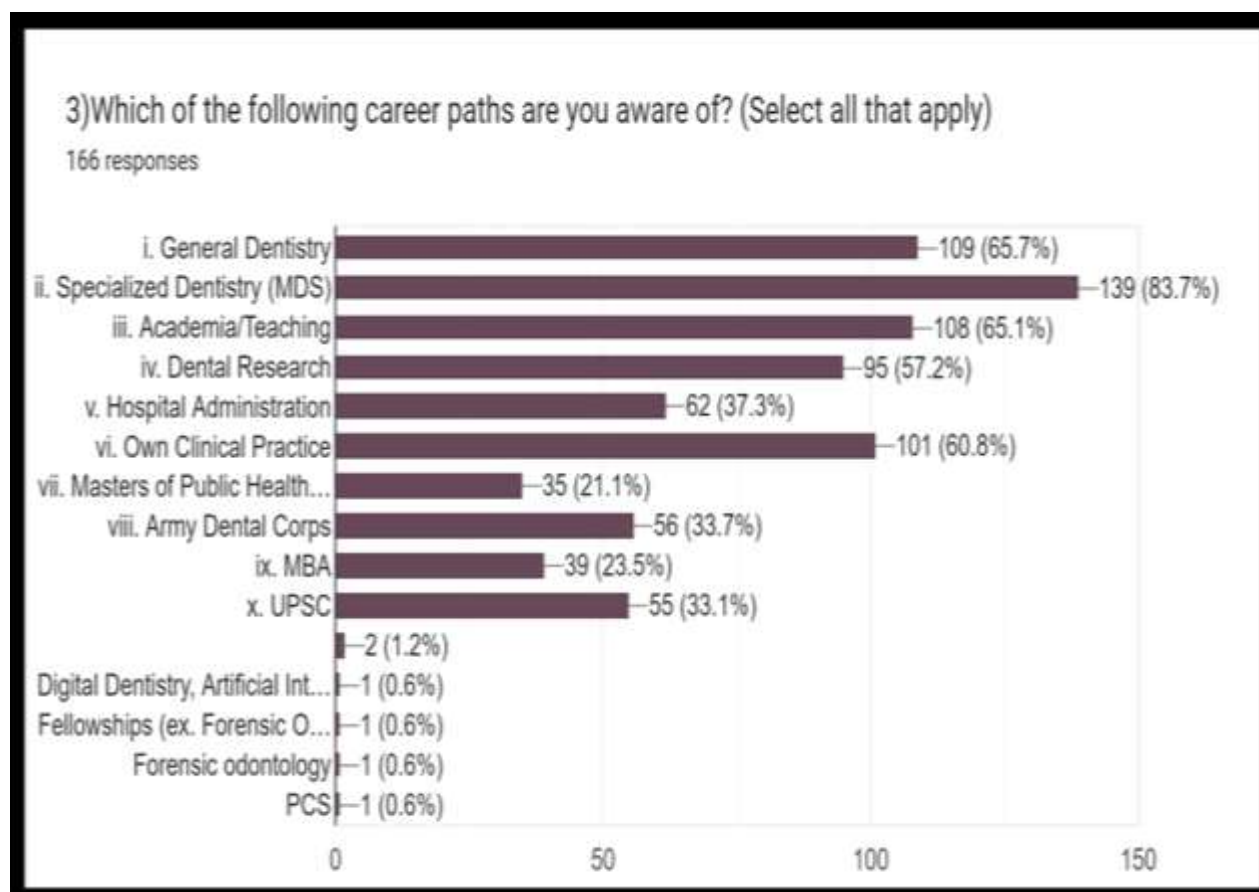
Statistical Analysis

The statistics was generated by Google Form in form of pie charts and graphs and tabulated accordingly.

Results:-

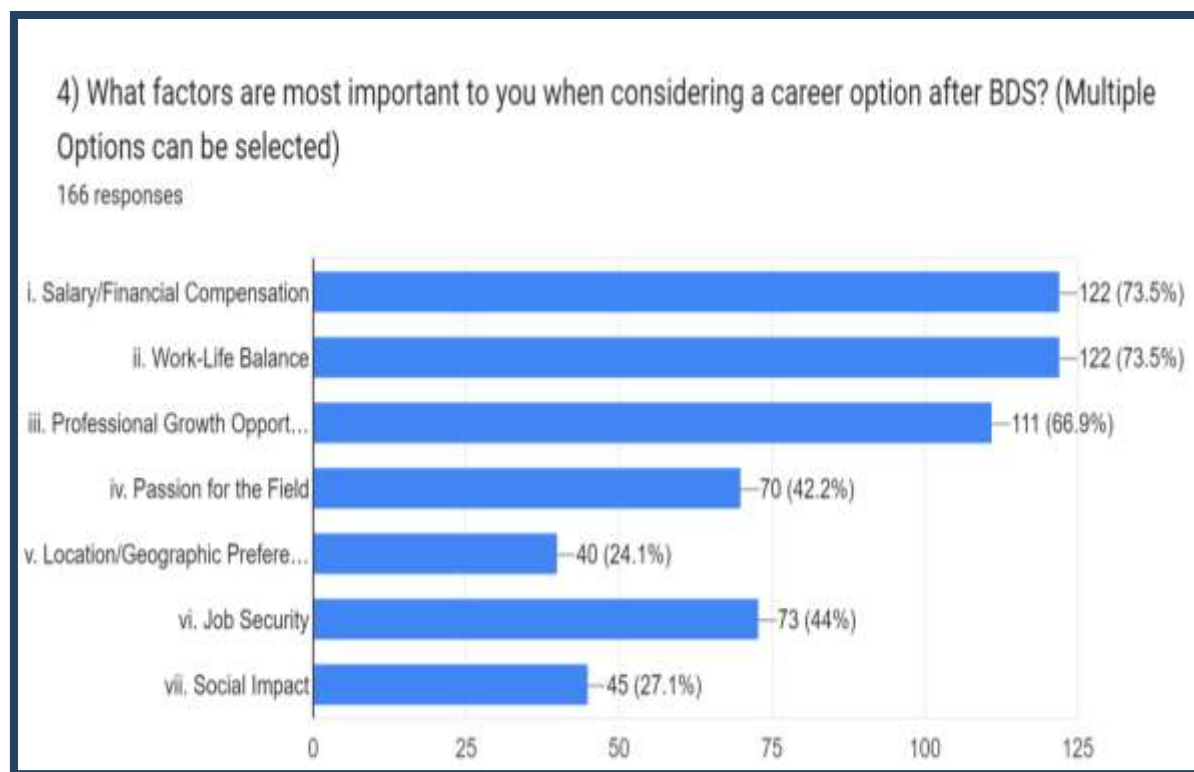
The results were generated by the Google Forms-Pie charts and bar graphs were generated which illustrated the responses of the participants . Out of 200 participants we have received 166 responses from all over West Bengal. In the state of West Bengal there are three government and three private dental colleges . So in this study all the colleges were included to get an unbiased authentic result. Most of the responses were from Guru Nanak Institute of Dental Sciences & Research followed by Haldia Institute of Dental Sciences & Research and the least responses were obtained in Burdwan Dental College and Hospital followed by Kusum Devi Sunder Lal Dugur Jain Dental College and Hospital.

A question was included in the questionnaire regarding the awareness on career options and it showed that the internees of West Bengal had the perception of choosing Master of Dental Surgery (83.7%) followed by their own clinical practice (60.8%) after completing their graduation. (Graph 1)



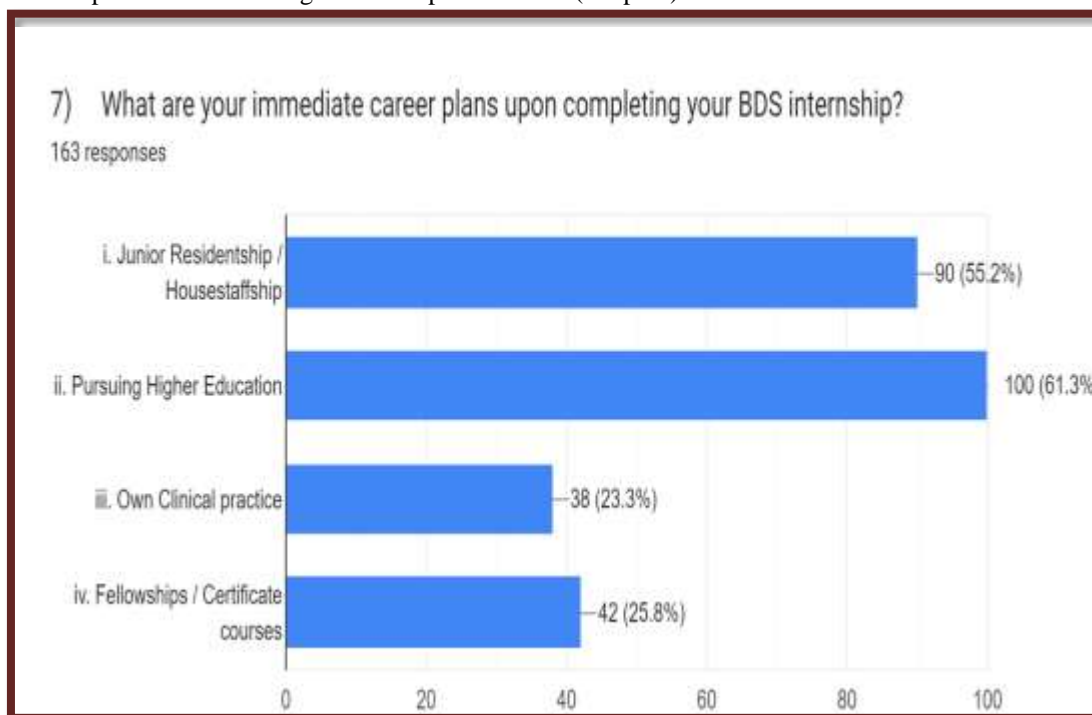
Graph 1:- Responses on the awareness of career paths.

A multiple choice question was given with respect to the various aspects of considering a career option after BDS and it showed that the salary / financial compensation (73.5%) and work life balance (73.5%) were of the utmost importance to the internees of West Bengal.(Graph 2)



Graph 2:- Response On Factors Most Important To You While Considering Career Option.

Immediately after completing their BDS, the interneers of West Bengal wanted to opt for higher education and house-staffship rather than starting their own private clinic (Graph 3)



Graph 3:- Response On Career Plans Immediately After BDS.

More than 75 % of Dental Graduates in the state wanted to continue in the field of dentistry rather than changing

their profession. Maximum Internees (56.2%) showed interest in exploring non-traditional career paths such as dental entrepreneurship, digital consultancy or dental technology innovation. The study showed that about 38.5% respondents of West Bengal prioritized post graduation study instead of immediate employment (28.6%). Out of 166 responses, 78 of the respondents showed interest in getting trained in oral and maxillofacial surgery followed by Endodontics (44.1%) and Orthodontics (42.2%).

Discussion:-

The role of lifelong learning is recognized because of its significance in ensuring professional skills, effective patient care, and career progress.⁴ Embarking on a journey towards dental career navigating through dental education is a critical phase for the internees. The present observational survey was carried out to assess the awareness of various career options after BDS among the dental students.

Through this study it was found that while the majority of internees were aware of traditional career paths such as specialized dentistry (83.7%), general dentistry (65.7%) and own clinical practice (60.8%) there was limited knowledge about emerging areas like Masters of Public Health Abroad (21.1%), digital dentistry, forensic odontology. This is similar to the result in a study conducted in Nagpur where most of the students were aware about the conventional career options like owning a clinic (97.97%), doing postgraduation (93.16%), but only a few were aware about emerging options like Dental You tuber (27.09%), Dental Blogger (37.47%).⁵ In a study conducted by Garla⁶ in 2011, 57.39% of undergraduates and interns aspired to do postgraduation education to achieve better wages and job prospects. Also, 79.1% of people wanted to pursue postgraduation as reported by Aggarwal et al.⁷ Comparatively, the proportion of people who wish to pursue postgraduation in India is less when compared with other countries probably due to less number of seats with heavy competition and higher course fee.⁸

The important factors influencing the choice of dentistry as a profession include general interest⁹, the artistic components of dentistry¹⁰, social standing and professional status¹¹, the ability to be self employed¹⁰, the opportunity to help people¹⁰ and good income¹⁰. The study revealed that the interns in West Bengal prioritized Salary/Financial Compensation (73.5%) as well as Work Life Balance (73.5%) when considering their career option, while little importance was laid on Location/Geographic Preference (24.1%). In a study by Thosar, Nilima & Pathak, Swanand & Ikhar, Anuja & Gupta, Suruchi. (2019) on question pertaining to balance in personal and professional life about 47% students agreed that dentists can maintain balance between professional and personal life. Dental students and interns in the present study chose their future speciality according to personal interest, future job opportunities, diversity of cases, high earning potential, opportunity to generate income in private practice, shortage of specialists in particular areas, and a positive experience during undergraduate elective rotation. These factors should be considered in initial career guidance, support provided in the undergraduates and internship years, and during elective rotations.

In our study 76.8% interns opted to continue in the field of dentistry while 20.1% were uncertain whether to continue in this field or not. In a similar study conducted in BJS Dental College & Hospital and Research Institute Ludhiana, a total of 61% interns were interested in pursuing dentistry after BDS, while 39% of them were not.¹²

The preference among dental graduates to not immediately open clinical practices after BDS and instead opt to work under someone or pursue higher education reflects several factors: Experience and Skill Development, Financial Considerations, Specialization and Career Advancement, Market Awareness and Competition, Desire for Mentorship and Guidance. In this study only 23.3% interns have opted to start their clinical practice immediately after internship while majority opted to work under government (55.2%) whereas in a similar study conducted in Nagpur participants did not prefer working in a government setup but reported a preference for pursuing a private practice, probably because of heavy work load and poor pay in former setup.⁵

Our study showed 38.5% internees prioritized post graduation while 28.3% gave equal priority to post graduation and immediate employment immediately after BDS. In a similar study conducted in Bhubaneswar in 2011, 57.39% of undergraduates and interns aspired to do postgraduation.⁶

In the study in BJS dental college, Ludhiana, when Interns were queried about the necessity of seeking MDS, that whether it was crucial for becoming an established dentist, 70% opted for 'yes' out of which 72.4% interns favored the opinion that people want to get treated from a specialist, while the rest 27.6% thought that it was due to lack of respect towards general dentist.¹²

The Study revealed that the most preferred branch chosen by internees for MDS was Oral and Maxillofacial surgery (48.4%) followed by Endodontics with percentage of (44.1%) and Orthodontics (42.2%). A similar Study in Karachi Pakistan revealed their preferred branch as Endodontics (65%).¹³

Conclusion:-

The study underscores the importance of providing comprehensive career guidance and mentorship support to dental students as they navigate the transition from dental school to professional practice. By empowering students with the knowledge and resources they need to make informed career decisions to foster a generation of dental professionals who are not only clinically proficient but also equipped to thrive in diverse professional settings.

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