

Motivational factors for choosing dentistry as a career: a survey of undergraduate dental students in Ireland

Précis: Motivational factors influencing future dental students include altruism, employment opportunities, financial security, and independence. Nationality, year of study, and mode of entry influenced these factors.

Abstract

Introduction: Dentistry is a highly sought after university course but the motivations for students choosing dentistry as a career in Ireland are not well understood.

Objective: The aim of this study is to investigate the reasons why students choose dentistry as a professional career in Ireland.

Methods: All undergraduate dental students (n=225) in an Irish university in the academic year 2016/17 were invited to participate in a cross-sectional survey. Participants were asked to rate a list of 12 factors that influenced their decision to pursue dentistry as a career.

Results: The response rate was 85.3% (n=192). The majority of the participants were female (65%), aged between 18 and 23 years (69%) and from the European Union (60%). Over half (55%) entered the programme directly from secondary-level education. The motivational factor with the highest median rating of importance was altruism.

Conclusion: Motivational factors influencing dental students included altruism, financial security, and independence. Having a previous family connection with the dental profession did not feature strongly. Positive previous experiences of dentistry and dental professionals emerged as a new motivational factor. Nationality, mode of entry and year of study influenced the motivational factors of the students surveyed.

Key words: Dental education, motivation, survey, undergraduate students.

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