

## Preference of Practicing Dental Surgeons between Pediatric Dentistry Post-graduate Students and MDS Graduates for Pediatric Consultation: A Questionnaire Based Study

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** To determine whether dentists prefer postgraduate students or MDS graduates for treating children and the reason for the same.

**Materials and Methods:** A self-constructed questionnaire on a general dentist's choice between post graduate students or MDS graduates for pediatric consultation having 11 questions was formulated and shared electronically. 165 responses were recorded which were then statistically analysed by the Chi-Square test.

**Results:** 65.7% of dentists prefer calling a MDS graduate over a student (34.3%) for pediatric consultation despite the postgraduate student charging half the fees for the same treatment. MDS graduates (73.3%) were preferred over students (26.7%) even if a final year student was treating more cases on a daily basis than the MDS graduate.

**Conclusion:** Regardless of cost or years of experience, the majority of dentists preferred those with an already existing MDS degree rather than postgraduate students. However, one-third of dentists from both extremes of the age spectrum preferred to counsel postgraduate students. It's possible that this is owing to their lower fees.

**Clinical significance:** This survey helps in understanding job prospects for pediatric dentists during and after the completion of post-graduation.

**Key words:** Preference, Dental, Consultation, Students, Graduates

**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:** Palak Janiani, Ganesh Jeevanandan, Preference of Practicing Dental Surgeons between Pediatric Dentistry Post-graduate Students and MDS Graduates for Pediatric Consultation: A Questionnaire Based Study, J Res Med Dent Sci, 2022, 10 (3):28-31.

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**Received:** 31-Jan-2022, Manuscript No. JRMDS-22-52875;

**Editor assigned:** 03-Feb-2022, Pre QC No. JRMDS-22-52875 (PQ);

**Reviewed:** 17-Feb-2022, QC No. JRMDS-22-52875;

**Revised:** 22-Feb-2022, Manuscript No. JRMDS-22-52875 (R);

**Published:** 01-Mar-2022

### INTRODUCTION

Dental problems are commonly seen in children given their excessive sweet consumption, active conduct which makes them prone to injuries, neglect towards oral health and occasionally due to the inability to find a dental healthcare provider who is adept at dealing with behavioural immaturities [1].

A wavering temperament and lack of compliance form the pillars for providing behaviours management in a pediatric oral health care set-up. Population based studies have proved that almost 10% of Swedish children display a variety of behaviours management problems along with dental fear and anxiety [2,3]. Owing to their impressionable age and behavioural shortcomings such as a volatile personality and psychology, working with children presents a unique challenge to a dentist.

Along with having a wide array of behaviours guidance approaches, a pediatric dentist should be able to ascertain the extent of a child's physical and mental developmental status and assess their expectations from the treatment.

This would aid in accurately estimating the most likely reaction towards the dental treatment [4]. General dentists might lack these particular skills making the management of the patient as well as the procedure overtly strenuous. Rich et al through his study demonstrated how only 40.4% of the dentists were well equipped to treat child patients while an even lesser 33.4% had sufficient clinical knowledge to prepare them well for these patients [5]. These very reasons highlight the need for specialists ranging from those students completing their post-graduation in pediatric and Preventive Dentistry or Postgraduates (MDS) in this field.

To date, the attitude of general dentists in providing dental health care in children has been assessed. As per our knowledge, there are no studies in literature assessing a general dentist's preference between post graduate students or MDS graduates for pediatric consultation. This questionnaire based study aims to determine whether dentists prefer postgraduate students or MDS graduates for treating children and the reason for the same.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Ethical considerations

The present survey was undertaken after obtaining ethical approval from the Institutional review board (SRB) at Saveetha Dental College & Hospital, Chennai, India.

### Study design

The study was completed in two phases; phase one involved developing, designing and validating the questionnaire whereas phase two consisted of testing the validated questionnaire among 200 practicing dental surgeons.

A self-constructed questionnaire on a general dentist's choice between post graduate students or MDS graduates for pediatric consultation was independently formulated by two investigators, who then arrived at a consensus to make a final list of 11 questions.

The survey included questions on demographic details, hypothetical scenarios on their preferences regarding pediatric dental consultation. To check the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted involving 10 random practising dental surgeons, who rated it using content validity ratio and the 5-point Likert scale.

After the questions were considered to be reliable, the survey was shared electronically as a Google form link via email and/or whatsapp to 200 practicing dentists from all specialties in dentistry, except pediatric dentistry. Distribution and data collection was done by one of the investigators. 165 responses were recorded which were then statistically analysed.

### Statistical analysis

The collected data was tabulated on an excel sheet and exported to IBM SPSS software version 22 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) for statistical analysis. Chi-square test was done.

## RESULTS

Out of the 165 dentists who filled the questionnaire, 90 were female and 75 were males, with the majority of them belonging to the 20-30 year old age group. The demographic details of the patients have been given in Table 1.

Table 2 represents dentists' preferences for pediatric consultation, taking into account that a final-year pupil charges half the fees for the same

Table 1: Demographic details of participants who filled the questionnaire.

		Percentage
Age	20-30 years	56.00%
	30-40 years	14.70%
	40-50 years	14.70%
	50-60 years	11.90%
	60-70 years	0.90%
Gender	>70 years	1.80%
	Male	45.90%
	Female	54.10%
Qualification	Bachelor of Dental surgery (BDS)	44.00%
	Master of Dental Surgery (MDS)	54.10%
Consulting pediatric dentist visiting your clinic	PhD	1.90%
	Yes	60.60%
	No	39.40%

care. This was seen to be statistically significant (p<0.05).

Figure 1 depicts the percentage of people who would prefer calling a MDS graduate (65.7%) over a student (34.3%) for pediatric consultation despite the postgraduate student charging half

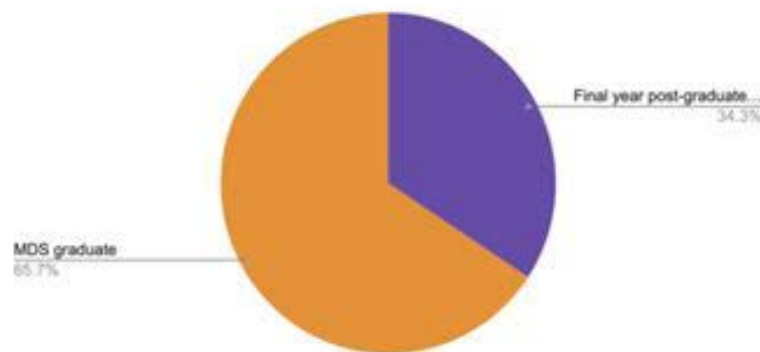
the fees for the same treatment.

Figure 2 shows the ratio of general dentists preferring MDS graduates (73.3%) over students (26.7%) even if a final year student was treating more cases on a daily basis than the MDS graduate.

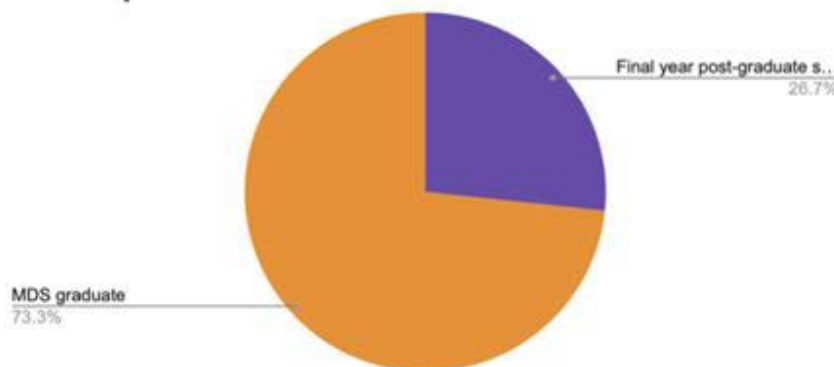
**Table 2: Age wise distribution of preference of general dentists regarding the fees for pediatric consultation, considering a final year student charges half the fees for the same treatment.**

		Final year post-graduate student	MDS graduate	Total	p value
20 - 30 Years	Count	25	56	81	0.046#
	% within Age	34.40%	65.60%	100%	
30 - 40 Years	Count	6	20	26	
	% within Age	18.80%	81.30%	100%	
40 - 50 Years	Count	7	24	31	
	% within Age	12.50%	87.50%	100%	
50 - 60 Years	Count	3	20	23	
	% within Age	23.10%	76.90%	100%	
60 - 70 Years	Count	2	0	2	
	% within Age	100.00%	0%	100%	
> 70 Years	Count	2	0	2	
	% within Age	100.00%	0%	100%	

# statistically significant (p<0.05)



**Figure 1: Pie chart depicting the preference of participants between MDS graduates and final year post graduate students if the student was to charge half the fees for a particular treatment.**



**Figure 2: Pie chart showing the preference of general dentists between MDS graduates and students if a final year student was treating more cases on a daily basis than the MDS graduates.**

## DISCUSSION

Many general dentists are apprehensive about providing dental treatment to children due to their uncooperative nature. This can result in children not getting the most out of existing treatments and technologies [1]. Lack of advanced training, according to Seale and Casamassimo, is to blame for general dentists' reduced treatment of small children [6], hence emphasizing the need for specialists to step in and provide adequate treatment. The aim of this questionnaire-based research was to assess whether dentists prefer postgraduate students or MDS graduates to treat children, and if so, why.

According to our findings, the majority of dentists who took part in the study choose to treat patients with the assistance of a consultant (60.6%). This was similar to the results obtained by Thomas et al and this may be attributed to a bereft of self-confidence or the intent to provide better treatment to their patients.

Given a hypothetical situation where a postgraduate student charges less than a MDS graduate for the same treatment, it was seen that there was a significant difference in the preference of the dentists based on their age. All the participants above the age of 60 opted for a postgraduate student in this hypothetical situation. Given their older age, they would be more experienced in the field of dentistry and hence more confident to handle any situation. This would explain their choice as they are paying less and if a situation arises where the postgraduate student needs help due to his/her lack of experience, they could step in. However, most of the younger age group participants chose MDS graduates. This can be justified as most of the dentists in those age groups are trying to establish their clinics and the provision of a specialist for treatment of children would impress more patients.

Another situation that was put forth in this study involved choosing between the final year postgraduate student or MDS graduate if the final year student was treating more cases on a

daily basis than the MDS graduate. 73.3% of the participants opted for MDS graduates. (Figure 2). This can be attributed to their on paper experience.

The present research used a limited sample size of 165 people. Better findings will be obtained from a larger sample with a comparable number of participants in each age group.

## CONCLUSION

Regardless of the cost or years of practice, the majority of the participants opted to call a pediatric dentist for consultations, especially those with an MDS degree. However, one-third of the dentists from both extreme age groups preferred calling post graduate students for consultation. This could be due to their lesser fees.

## CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

This survey helps in understanding job prospects for pediatric dentists during and after the completion of post-graduation.

## FUNDING

None.

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