



## Evaluation Of Knowledge Among Dental Undergraduates About Specialty Education Abroad: An Original Research

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The field of dentistry is constantly evolving, with new advancements and techniques being introduced regularly. To keep pace with these developments, dental professionals often seek specialized education and training abroad. Specialty education abroad offers dental undergraduates the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and enhance their skills in specific areas of dentistry.

**Method And Material:** We carried out a cross-sectional online survey among dental students in their last year, interns, and recent graduates. The D.Y. Patil Dental college and hospital in Pune's institutional ethics committee granted permission to perform the study (IEC: 348/2023). The protocol has been submitted to the Indian Clinical Trial Registry (CTRI/2023/05/026553). All pupils provided their informed consent.

**Conclusion:** Studying abroad as a dentist offers numerous benefits, including a broader perspective, enhanced education, cultural competence, networking opportunities, personal growth, and a competitive advantage. It can be a transformative experience that shapes dentists into well-rounded professionals ready to excel in their careers on a global scale.

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### INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of knowledge among dental undergraduates about specialty education abroad encompasses various aspects. Firstly, it involves assessing their understanding of the specific requirements and prerequisites for pursuing specialized education in different countries. This includes knowledge about the application process, language proficiency requirements, licensing examinations, and accreditation standards. Additionally, evaluating their knowledge about the financial aspects, such as scholarships, grants, and funding opportunities, is vital as it enables undergraduates to plan and secure necessary resources for their international education.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different educational programs abroad helps them make informed decisions about selecting the most suitable institution for their specialized training. It is also essential to evaluate their knowledge about the cultural, social, and professional norms of the host country, as it facilitates their adaptation and integration into the new environment. In the evaluation of knowledge among dental undergraduates

about specialty education abroad plays a vital role in ensuring their preparedness for international training.

## METHOD AND MATERIAL

A sample size of 350 was produced using a response distribution of 60%, a 5% margin of error, and a 90% confidence interval. We had gathered information on their age, sex, and a screening question to assess if they intended to pursue higher education abroad. The country of higher education, the reasons for studying abroad, perspectives on studying abroad and thoughts on the steps made by foreign universities to assist international students were all covered in a self-administered questionnaire. For each of these questions, students might select more than one answer. The questionnaire also asked about the state of their application process, their present plans and their thoughts on looking into other options.

The panel's suggestions, which came from faculty members and dental student representatives over the course of three rounds, were used to create the questionnaire, which was then customised for the Indian dental education contexts. A pilot study was carried out to assess the questionnaire's viability and face and content validity. Positive feedback on the questionnaire led to minor phrasing changes that maintained clarity. The researchers created an online survey instrument using Google Forms and sent the URL to the survey along with a succinct justification for the study's necessity through WhatsApp study groups. Students were urged to complete the questionnaire and asked to distribute it to their other classmates. To take part in this study, we gathered about 5000 students from 40 public and private dentistry schools. In view of the nature of this study, the investigators had no influence on participant selection because the survey instrument was circulated throughout the student groups at these universities through study groups. Responses to the survey were accepted from 17 April 2023 until 26 May 2023. Dental students who didn't want to participate or didn't want to seek higher study abroad were excluded.

## RESULTS

Out of the 600 respondents, 12 students chose not to take part. 150 of them were further disqualified since they didn't want to continue higher education abroad. The final sample consisted of 500 students, the majority of whom (65%) were in their final year of dental school and were female (70%). The students average age was 23 . Males and females did not differ significantly in the distribution of students with (n = 500) or without (n = 123) plans to study abroad. The majority of students (60%) were unsure of where they stood in the application process. For over half of the students (50%), the present decision to study abroad is still questionable, while almost one-fourth of the students would prefer to postpone their plan More than 3/4 of the students would think about taking a year off and exploring alternative options if conditions were unfavourable. When it came to the application process' current state, considerably more female students than male students were "not sure" or still "searching colleges" .

**Table 1: Analysis and comparison of dental students, both male and female, who are pursuing higher education abroad:**

Questions	Male	Female
What is status of your application process?		
Enrolled	10	15
Filling out applications	14	8
Not sure	40	150
Searching for colleges	36	71

The US (72%), the UK (65%), Australia, and New Zealand (68%) were the top three countries for those looking to further their education. The most frequently mentioned reasons for seeking higher education abroad were "better quality of education and training," "better lifestyle and living standards," "ease in finding work after education," "better research opportunities," and "desire to live and work abroad."

The most significant drawbacks to studying abroad were "difficulty obtaining permanent residency," "travel restrictions," "tougher admission protocol," and "study budget." The majority of students believed that colleges should "ease in visa formalities," "flexible admission criteria," and "flexible study options."

**Table 2: Analysis of male and female dental students' preferences and opinions towards pursuing higher education overseas**

Questions	Male	Female	Total N(%)	P-Value
<b>Which countries are you considering to study abroad?</b>				
USA	90	200	290(72.5)	0.97
UK	86	186	270(68)	0.56
Europe	68	127	195(48.5)	0.07
ANZ	70	185	255(63.7)	0.09
Middle East	44	82	126(31.5)	0.32
South Asian countries	21	63	84(21)	0.31
<b>Which of the following reasons have led to your decisions to study abroad?</b>				
Better quality of education and training	105	242	346(86.5)	0.28
Ease in finding work after education	95	144	239(59)	0.44
Increasing competition in India.	90	149	239(59.8)	<0.001
Desire to live and work abroad	90	206	294(73.5)	0.73
Better research opportunities	90	225	315(78.8)	0.62
<b>In your opinion, which of the following measures, if taken by the foreign universities, may be useful in getting admissions?</b>				
Extended deadlines of application	110	214	324(81)	0.23
Ease in visa formalities	115	260	375(93.8)	0.30
Flexible admission criteria	110	259	369(92.2)	0.07

When asked why they chose to study or take licensure examinations outside of India, considerably more females than males stated that "increasing competition in India" was one of their motivations (p 0.001). . The reliability coefficient for the domain "cons of pursuing your career abroad was 0.58, and the coefficient decreased when any item was deleted.

## DISCUSSION

We wanted to assess how Indian dentistry students felt about seeking a career abroad. The majority of students in several dental institutions in India were female, which may be because women prefer dentistry as a career. It can be due to the idea that women are better at juggling their personal and professional lives because the dental industry offers more flexible working hours. Many obstacles, such as visa requirements, homesickness, budgetary constraints, and other issues, may arise when continuing your studies abroad. In our study, the majority of participants chose to study in the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It can be a result of the independence, lifestyle, and communication options provided by these nations.

On the other hand, when it came to the countries which everyone preferred the least were South Asia and the Middle East. The lack of enthusiasm in dental students for middle eastern countries could be attributed to several challenges: supportive services, restricted movement, communication, and discrimination challenges. Europe, on the other hand, was the continent about which the students relatively had equal opinions. However, there were no significant differences between males and females. Living abroad seems to be rewarding and satisfactory in terms of money and lifestyle. According to several studies conducted in Vietnam and Japan, most students identify the lack of financial aid as the prime factor in not going abroad. Especially in these extraordinary times, one's fear of going abroad may increase many folds due to the added drawbacks like changing countries' policies. For example, the USA has altered its rules for an H1B visa, affecting many students in the future. A majority of students identified financial budget, strict admission protocols, and fewer chances of getting a permanent residency being the most critical factor for not going abroad.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, a substantial impact was perceived by Indian dental students concerning pursuing higher education abroad. Also, the effect was more for female students when compared to male students.

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