



Evaluation of Working Place Experience among Dentists of Teaching Hospitals in India: A Questionnaire Study

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Future employment and retention of dentists depend on a variety of key aspects, including the working environment, job satisfaction, and its general effect on their work experience.

Objective: The purpose of this research is to explore the working place experience among dentists of teaching hospitals in India.

Materials and Methods: The study was conducted among dentists of teaching hospitals all over India. Data were gathered using a standardized self-administered questionnaire, with one section collecting information on personal characteristics. Simultaneously, the other sections included questionnaires on work pressure, work satisfaction, working environment, work-life balance, progress, and turnover intention, respectively. The total and domain scores of the responses generated were calculated and compared across study participants among the various groups.

Results: An extensive evaluation of the 304 dentists working in dental teaching hospitals in India, who participated in this study, revealed that a significant majority of them experienced considerable stress in their working environment. Moreover, a majority expressed discomfort with their prevailing working conditions. The level of job satisfaction played a crucial role in influencing their work-life balance.

Conclusion: The study highlights the potential disparity between the workload and income of dentists in dental teaching hospitals in India, which can lead to work-related stress and burnout. Ensuring fair compensation aligned with responsibilities is crucial. Striking a work-life balance and creating a supportive environment benefits both dentists and patients in the dental



healthcare system.

Clinical significance: If the working conditions are conducive for the dental professionals then their work output will be enhanced and that will lead to a greater level of patient satisfaction.

Introduction

Dentists are skilled healthcare professionals who diagnose, prevent, and treat various oral health conditions. They play a significant role in promoting oral health and providing dental care services to the population. Dental teaching hospitals serve as important centers for dental education, research, and healthcare delivery. Dentists working in these institutions play a crucial role in training future dental professionals, conducting research, and providing specialized dental care to patients. Understanding their workplace experience is essential to evaluate their professional environment, then identify the challenges faced, and develop strategies accordingly to enhance their job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being.^[1]

Work satisfaction is a crucial factor that affects dentists' motivation, commitment, and performance toward their work.^[2] Exploring the factors that contribute to their job satisfaction can provide valuable insights into the elements that positively impact their overall working experience, thereby reducing burnout.^[3] Therefore, overall work satisfaction is a complex series of interrelationships rather than a single entity between professional autonomy, patient interaction, income, career advancement, work opportunities, overall work environment, and work-life balance.^[4-6] Dentists of teaching hospitals are subjected to a variety of work-related factors that may significantly influence their motivation toward work and overall well-being. Work-life balance is imperative to the well-being of all human beings, including dentists who are entrusted with the mammoth task of taking care of the oral health of patients. The demanding nature of the dental practice, long working hours, and high patient load can potentially impact their personal life and overall quality of life.^[7,8] Prolonged physical and psychological exhaustion leads to poor turnover intention.^[9] Understanding the challenges faced by dentists in balancing their personal and professional responsibilities can help identify potential interventions or strategies to promote a better work-life balance.

Continuous personal and professional development is crucial for dentists to stay updated with the latest advancements, techniques, and research in the field of dentistry.^[10,11] Identifying the availability and accessibility of professional development opportunities for dentists in India can shed light on the resources and support systems in place to foster their career growth and competence. On the other hand, it is also the duty of dental professionals to understand whether their expectations and attitudes toward their work are reasonable, achievable, or rational.^[12]

This research aims to evaluate the overall working place experience among dentists of teaching hospitals in India, focusing on aspects such as workplace environment, job satisfaction, personal and professional development, workload, and work-life balance.

Materials and Methods

Ethical Consideration

The Institutional Research and Ethics Committee, Reference Number KIIT/KIMS/IEC/1418/2023, dated 27 October 2023, provided the ethical clearance for this study. The study complies with the ethical standards for human experimentation and the Helsinki Declaration of 1975 revised in 2000.

Study Location and Design

The study was intended to provide a cross-sectional evaluation, focusing to evaluate the Working Place Experience among Dentists of Teaching Hospitals in India that is the academicians, postgraduates, and interns.

Informed Consent

The participants were informed about the study and their consent was taken. By clicking on the “next” button in the Google form of the online questionnaire, consent was obtained from the subjects for their willingness to participate in the study.



Questionnaire

To gather relevant data, a standardized self-administered questionnaire was devised and distributed among the participants as a Google form. This questionnaire consisted of seven sections, encompassing personal information, work pressure, work satisfaction, working environment, work-life balance, progress, and turnover intention. Data collection took place from the 1st of March 2023 to the 30th of June 2023, spanning four months.

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

Dentists (Academicians/faculty, Postgraduate (PG) students, and interns) in teaching hospitals in India with at least a year of experience who were ready to participate willingly were included in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Dentists who are not working in any dental teaching hospital in India and not willing to participate were not included in the study.

Sample Size

Over the course of 12 weeks, data was collected. The total sample size for the study comprised 304 licensed dentists. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents, all data was personally collected and disseminated.

Statistical Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 27.0 (IBM Corp. Released 2020. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 27.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp) was employed to analyze the data. To show continuous data

and summarize categorical data, frequency counts, and percentages were used. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to build models based on individual variables (age, gender, dental experience, job title, and highest degree).

Result

Personal and Professional Characteristics (Table 1)

Within the confines of this comprehensive study, a diverse and well-represented group of 304 dentists working in dental teaching hospitals in India, encompassing a wide spectrum of ages ranging from 20 to 70 years, were evaluated with the help of a questionnaire distributed as a Google form link. About more than half of the participants (90.2%) were under 45 years, and 66.1% had less than a decade of work experience in the field of dentistry. The study sample consisted of 57.2% females and 42.8% males.

Diving further into the participants' academic background, the study revealed that 46.1% of the dentists were dental graduates who had studied in a dental school and had a degree as Bachelor of Dental Surgery (B.D.S.), while the remaining 53.9% were post-graduates who had specialized in a particular branch of dentistry and were recipients of an M.D.S. degree. 43.1% of the respondents were non-faculty members, comprising interns and post-graduate trainees, while the remaining 56.9% served as esteemed faculty members within various dental teaching schools.

The personal and professional findings from this comprehensive and all-encompassing research are succinctly summarized in Table 1, which serves as a repository of valuable data and essential insights.

Variable	Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)	20-25	104	34.2%
	26-30	79	26%
	31-35	33	10.9%
	36-40	37	12.2%
	41-45	21	6.9%
	46-50	12	3.9%



	51-55	6	2%
	56-60	3	1%
	61-65	6	2%
	66-70	3	1%
Gender	Male	130	42.8%
	Female	174	57.2%
Experience in dentistry (in years)	1-5	134	44.1%
	6-10	67	22%
	11-15	49	16.1%
	16-20	18	5.9%
	21-25	21	6.9%
	26-30	3	1%
	31-35	6	2%
	36-40	6	2%
Job title	Intern	109	35.9%
	Post graduate trainee	22	7.2%
	Tutor	25	8.2%
	Reader	36	11.8%
	Lecturer	3	1%
	Senior lecturer	30	9.9%
	Associate professor	31	10.2%
	Professor	48	15.8%
Highest degree	B.D.S.	140	46.1%
	M.D.S.	164	53.9%

Table 1: Personal and Professional Characteristics of the Participants



Responses to Questions Evaluating Working Place Experience among Dentists of Teaching Hospitals in India (Table 2)

Table 2 presents a comprehensive analysis of the questionnaire responses provided by dentists working in teaching hospitals in India. The sequence of questions was thoughtfully organized, focusing on work pressure, work satisfaction, working environment, work-life balance, progress, and turnover intention, to gather their valuable opinions and insights.

The majority of dentists (96%) worked 6 days a week, with a mere 2% working more, and another 2% working less than 6 days. Interestingly, 68.4% of the participants aspired to reduce their working days to 5 days a week, 15.8% preferred 4 days, and another 15.8% were content with 6 days, while none voted for a 7-day workweek. When asked about their preferences, 61.2% expressed a desire to decrease their working time, while 34.9% were content with their current working hours, and only 3.9% desired an increase. An astonishing finding emerged from the study, that 77.3% of the dentists felt pressured by the amount of accreditation-related work their college required for institutional growth.

When it came to work satisfaction, a significant majority (67.4%) expressed dissatisfaction with their income, given the efforts they invested in their work. Interestingly, 93.1% of the participants believed that proper time management could lead to reduced working hours, indicating the potential for improvement in work-life balance.

Among the participating dentists, 22.7% shared similar ideologies with their colleagues or hospital, while a significant majority of 77.3% held differing opinions. More than half of the dentists (63.5%) were merely adjusting to their working environment, with only a few (36.5%) feeling genuinely comfortable in that setting.

The survey conducted a comprehensive assessment of the dentists' work-life balance, and the findings were quite startling, as a staggering 95.1% reported having an average to poor work-life balance. To gain insights into this aspect, participants were asked about their vacation frequency. Astonishingly, only 5% of the respondents took holidays frequently, while 27.6% managed to take holidays often. However, the majority, comprising 67.4% of the participants, rarely took vacations, indicating that they were workaholics spending no

quality time with friends and family thus damaging their mental health.

Regarding personal and professional growth, close to 50% of dentists felt that they were progressing both as individuals and professionals. In contrast, approximately 10% experienced a decline in growth on both fronts, and the rest had a relatively stagnant life, not experiencing significant progress in either aspect.

Lastly, shifting our focus to the last section on turnover intention, a mere 7.9% of the participants expressed satisfaction with their current income, while a significant 39.1% believed they had the potential to earn more. Additionally, 29.6% felt a strong need to increase their earnings, and a slightly smaller but still noteworthy proportion of 23.4% felt undervalued in their current work situation. In terms of work opportunities, a vast majority of 75.3% believed that there were more opportunities available beyond their present position.

When reflecting on the possibility of leaving dentistry as a profession entirely, 31.9% of the respondents voted for a 50% or higher chance of making such a decision. Conversely, 68.1% had a probability of less than 50% leaving the field. However, when considering leaving their current workplace specifically, a significant 74.3% believed there was a 50% or higher likelihood of doing so, while the remaining 25.7% had less inclination to leave their present workplace.

Regarding the reasons for considering leaving their current workplace, 40.1% of the participants expressed a desire to leave due to the belief that there were more work opportunities elsewhere. Additionally, 20.7% wished for professional autonomy, 25.4% sought a better work-life balance, and 13.8% aimed to achieve greater work satisfaction as their motivation for potential workplace change.

When dentists were asked about their opinions on how they would like to improve their current working conditions, the responses revealed a close balance among several key factors. Approximately 14.7% of respondents highlighted the importance of building better working relationships and connections with colleagues and staff. Another 14.5% emphasized the need to plan and prioritize their tasks effectively. An almost equal proportion (14.2%) of dentists expressed the desire to acknowledge and improve upon their weak spots and challenges and emphasized the importance of recognizing and leveraging their strengths and abilities.



Furthermore, a significant concern for 13.6% of respondents was achieving a better work-life balance, indicating that this aspect is crucial for their overall well-being. There was a close call with 12% wishing to set clear milestones in the future and 10.1% of respondents highlighted the importance of being aware of their limitations and working within those boundaries. Another 6.7% emphasized the need to stop multitasking, recognizing its potential impact on their efficiency and stress levels.

Overall, the responses reflect a comprehensive range of factors that dentists consider crucial for enhancing their working conditions. These insights can serve as valuable input for dental institutions to implement strategies that promote better work environments, address the concerns of their dentists, and ultimately lead to improved job satisfaction, well-being, and productivity.

Question	Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Work pressure			
How long are your daily work hours in the hospital?	< 8 hours	49	16.1%
	8 hours	173	57%
	> 8 hours	67	22%
	Non-specific	15	4.9%
According to you, the working hours should be,	Decreased	186	61.2%
	Increased	12	3.9%
	Remain same	106	34.9%
What is your number of working days in a week?	4 days	3	1%
	5 days	3	1%
	6 days	292	96%
	7 days	6	2%
According to you how much should be the number of working days in a week?	4 days	48	15.8%
	5 days	208	68.4%
	6 days	48	15.8%
	7 days	0	0%
Do you feel pressured with the accreditation-related works of your college that are necessary for your institution to grow?	Yes	235	77.3%
	No	69	22.7%
Work satisfaction			
Based on the effort you put into your work, what is	Very satisfied	3	1%



your level of satisfaction with your salary income?	Satisfied	96	31.6%
	Dissatisfied	93	30.6%
	Very dissatisfied	112	36.8%
Do you believe proper time management can avoid extra work hours?	Yes	283	93.1%
	No	21	6.9%
Working environment			
Do you feel that your values (ideologies) are similar to the values (ideologies) of your colleagues or hospital?	Yes	69	22.7%
	No	235	77.3%
How comfortable are you in your working environment?	Excellent	21	6.9%
	Good	90	29.6%
	Alright	141	46.4%
	Bad	52	17.1%
Work-life balance			
How would you evaluate your work-life balance?	Excellent	15	4.9%
	Good	102	33.6%
	Alright	141	46.4%
	Bad	46	15.1%
How often do you take vacation?	Very often	15	5%
	Often	84	27.6%
	Rarely	205	67.4%
Progress			
What do you think about your personal growth?	Growing	138	45.4%
	Stagnant	144	47.4%
	Declining	22	7.2%
How would you assess your professional growth?	Growing	179	58.9%
	Stagnant	107	35.2%
	Declining	18	5.9%
Turnover intention			
What is your outlook toward your present income?	Satisfied with present income	24	7.9%



	Capable to earn more	119	39.1%
	Need to earn more	90	29.6%
	Undervalued	71	23.4%
Do you believe that there are more career opportunities for you?	Much more	103	33.9%
	More	126	41.4%
	Less	48	15.8%
	Very less	27	8.9%
What do you think is your probability of leaving your current work (dentistry) in the next few years?	0%	135	44.4%
	25%	72	23.7%
	50%	75	24.7%
	75%	22	7.2%
What is your probability of leaving your workplace in the next few years?	0%	30	9.9%
	25%	48	15.8%
	50%	81	26.6%
	75%	145	47.7%
What do you think is an important factor for your willingness to leave the organization in the future?	Overall work satisfaction	42	13.8%
	Other work opportunities	122	40.1%
	Level of professional autonomy	63	20.7%
	Work-life balance	77	25.4%
How would you like to improve the current working scenario?	Set clear milestones	157	12%
	Plan and prioritize	190	14.5%
	Stop multi-tasking	88	6.7%
	Acknowledge weak spots and improve	187	14.2%
	Be aware of your limitations	133	10.1%



	Build better working relationships and connections	193	14.7%
	Acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses	187	14.2%
	Work-life balance	178	13.6%

Table 2: Outcomes of the Questionnaire

Discussion

Work-related stress in the workplace is becoming a significant concern for dentists working in dental teaching hospitals in India. Our main aim was to identify the work culture and related stress among these dentists and how they affect their overall well-being. To accomplish this, a well-structured questionnaire was methodically developed and circulated online, ensuring that the questions were organized in a response format to minimize any potential order effects that could alter the meaning of the items.^[13]

The questionnaire was distributed to both faculty as well as non-faculty (Postgraduate students and interns) dentists employed in teaching hospitals across India, and a total of 304 dentists responded to the survey. To contextualize the findings, the study refers to previous research that explored the job satisfaction of dentists.^[2,14,15] These earlier studies revealed that several factors significantly influenced job satisfaction among dentists, which could be the environment in which they are working, secondly their take-home salary, thirdly their personal life, and finally the years of experience they are exposed to.^[16,17] The study contends that a dentist's working environment and quality of life might have a considerable impact on the delivery of care and interaction with patients, and consequently, the degree to which they are satisfied with their care.^[7]

The account of this group of dentists' working conditions raises several serious questions.^[18] Most participants in the study reported being under tremendous pressure due to long and extensive working hours, which were not commensurate with their compensation. Furthermore, there was an additional burden from the institutions regarding accreditation-related work, leading to an overwhelming workload and infrequent opportunities for vacations, ultimately resulting in a poor work-life balance.

An essential aspect of fostering a better workplace conducive to growth is to have everyone sharing similar ideologies and a desire for positive development. Surprisingly, the evaluation revealed that a majority of dentists held different opinions from their colleagues, leading to an uncomfortable environment in their workplace.

In their initial years of practice, dentists experienced substantial personal and professional growth. However, over time, this growth stagnated as the daily work routine became monotonous. Consequently, many dentists expressed a desire to leave their current workplaces, as they believed there were better work opportunities available elsewhere, offering higher income and greater recognition for their work. The pursuit of a better work-life balance became a significant driving force.

The importance of achieving a balance between personal and professional life cannot be overstated for dentists working in dental teaching hospitals in India. The study highlights that maintaining this balance is crucial for improving the overall well-being and outcomes of these dentists. When dentists are able to manage their work-related stress and enjoy a positive work environment, they are more likely to experience higher work satisfaction, leading to better performance and overall job fulfillment.

Addressing the emerging challenge of work-related stress is a pivotal step in creating a healthier and more supportive work environment for dentists. Dental institutions need to recognize and acknowledge the factors contributing to stress among their dentists, such as long working hours, heavy workloads, and inadequate compensation.^[19] By proactively addressing these issues, institutions can help reduce the burden on dentists and create an atmosphere that promotes well-being and professional growth.



Promoting a better work environment involves fostering a culture of support, collaboration, and open communication within dental teaching hospitals. This can be achieved through initiatives such as regular feedback sessions, opportunities for professional development, and support for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, creating a system that recognizes and rewards the efforts of dentists can further enhance their job satisfaction and motivation to excel in their roles.

Improving the working environment of dentists not only benefits the dentists themselves but also has a positive ripple effect on patient care. They are more likely to deliver high-quality care to their patients when they are happy and fulfilled at work.^[20,21]

Furthermore, a nurturing and supportive work environment can play a pivotal role in shaping the future dentists. When dental teaching hospitals prioritize the well-being of their current dentists, it sets a positive example for the next generation of dental professionals. This, in turn, can attract and retain talented individuals in the field of dentistry, fostering a cycle of continuous improvement and growth in the dental healthcare sector.

Limitations

Due to the online nature of the questionnaire study and participation being dependent on availability and willingness, there was a low response rate from practicing dentists.

Conclusion

The study sheds light on a concerning aspect of dental teaching hospitals in India, which is the potential disparity between the workload and the income of dentists. Dentists who feel undervalued for their efforts may be more likely to experience work-related stress and burnout. However, it is crucial to ensure that the compensation and benefits provided to dentists align with the workload and responsibilities they bear. The study also emphasizes that striking a balance between personal and professional life is essential for dentists in dental teaching hospitals in India. By addressing work-related stress and fostering an encouraging workplace, dental institutions can enhance the well-being and job satisfaction of their dentists, leading to improved patient care and the development of future dentists in a more positive and nurturing manner. Ultimately, this

approach benefits not only the dentists but also the patients they serve and the entire dental healthcare system in India.

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