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## Sociodemographic Characteristics and Career Decisions of Students in Dental School of Turkish Foundation University.

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### ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to determine the sociodemographic characteristics of students enrolled in a dental school of Turkish foundation university and their motives for the choice of dentistry. Questionnaires were distributed to second and third year students of Biruni University Faculty of Dentistry. Questionnaire included items about their sociodemographic characteristics and their motives for the choice of dentistry. 124 of 163 returned the survey for an overall response rate of 76.1 percent. Of the respondents, 76 (61.3 percent) were females and 48 (38.7 percent) were males; they had an average age of  $20.38 \pm 2.1$ . Personal decision had the greatest influence on the students in choosing dentistry as a career followed by first degree relative (father and mother). Fathers and mothers had similar impact on the students' choice of dental profession (46.0 percent and 52.1 percent, respectively). Relatives or family friends and a teacher in high school had more influence on female students' choice than those of male students significantly, respectively. Reputation and lifestyle provided by the profession and finding a job easily, were the predominant reasons that motivated both males and females to become a dentist. In conclusion, the reasons dental students enrolled in this study for choosing dentistry as a profession were primarily related to reputation and lifestyle provided by the profession, then economic.

**Keywords:** Turkey, dental education, choice of career, student motivations

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## INTRODUCTION

Dentists possess an imperative position in the public arena as authorized medical services workers. As in numerous countries, dentistry is a famous and trustworthy profession in Turkey. With the interest of university possibility to be qualified for schools offering dental training alongside the expansion in the requirement for dental services in the nation, there has as of late been a developing pattern to set up new dental schools there. The larger part of these schools are under the support of a state, in which the students' educational costs are secured by the government. However, some private foundation dental schools have likewise been established in the most recent decade in which students pay their own educational cost and charges unless they are conceded a grant.

The university entry process in Turkey is taking into account a central university registration examination held every year, taking after which students are designated to higher educational establishments in light of their scores that match their list of selections. A student who wishes to enter a dental school is required to get a sensibly high score to be qualified. This is valid for state schools and in addition private foundation schools. There is not yet a set up advising framework in each secondary school to attempt to fit students' profession decision with their capacities and attributes. As an outcome, while a few students are selected in a school that sets them up for the calling they truly needed, others happen to go to a school by chance and without having major data about the profession. As a result, people may enroll in a profession without knowing why they were coordinated that way [1]. In some different cases, students have picked a profession taking into account that of their parents or different relatives without considering whether they are truly suited for it [1,2]. All things considered, this choice appears to be sensible and profitable for the individual, giving him or her with an officially settled workplace [3,4].

Demographic investigations of dental students are valuable since they clarify the attributes of future dental work personal of a nation. Some studies have called attention to the requirement for an updated information on dental students for arranging purposes and have proposed that descriptive information on dental students can serve as an initial step to illuminate officials on the outline and execution of enrollment and maintenance policies [5,6]. The inspiration and purposes behind the determination of dentistry as a career may contrast from one populace to another, and the elements for picking dentistry may contrast amongst developed and developing countries since the encouragement of educators and parents is most significant in the last mentioned [1,7]. On the other hand, societal position and notoriety and also money related advantages of the profession have additionally been observed to be contributing components in determination of dentistry in some populaces [1,8,9]. Besides, it has been shown by some that financial status may influence the level of responsibility of a person to the profession [1,10]. The impact of gender on the thought processes in the choice of dentistry has likewise been a theme to which consideration has been coordinated by researchers [5,11,12].

Our overview of the literature found limited numbers of study that assessed the characteristics and study motivations of Turkish dental students. Accordingly, the motivations behind this study were to get the social and demographic profile of student in a private foundation dental school to gather data with respect to the reasons for their preferences.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted among the students of Biruni University, Faculty of Dentistry, Istanbul, Turkey, was affirmed by the Faculty Institutional Review Board in terms of human subjects and gathering of private information. Students from the second and third years were requested that take an interest. An organized questionnaire was readied, and pre-testing was done on a study group with a specific end goal to recognize fundamental changes and eliminate vague points.

Before the study, the students were educated about the content and were guaranteed of the secrecy of the exploration. Questionnaires were conveyed to every one of the students in second class of the school. Students were definitely not required to finish and give back the survey forms. Of the 163 students, 124 gave back the survey, for a general response rate of 76.1 percent.

The questionnaire involved inquiries regarding students' sociodemographic data, for example, sexual orientation, age, marital status, home sort, nationality, sort of high school from which the participant graduated,

and languages which they could speak. The students were additionally gotten some information about their first decisions amid university registration examinations, the reasons for leaning toward dentistry, if their parents were dental alternately medicinal experts. Data was additionally accumulated in regards to the students' social foundations, for example, the city in which they were conceived. Most of the questions were standard. A few questions were composed as a scale of five-point, and the participants were permitted to give one and only response to every inquiry.

Statistical analysis was done utilizing the SPSS 18. Amid the assessment of the data, aside from descriptive statistical tests (mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution), chi-square tests were utilized to compare qualitative data ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## RESULTS

One hundred twenty-four (76.1 percent) students returned the questionnaire. Seventy-six (61.3 percent) respondents were females, and forty-eight (38.7 percent) were males. The average age was  $20.38 \pm 2.1$ . One hundred one (81.4 percent) were of Turkish nationality. The remaining 20 percent indicated their country of origin as Iran, Iraq, Syria, China, Germany, USA, France, Azerbaijan or Jordan. Two students had a dual nationality. Among the respondents, one hundred five (84.7 percent) said their first language was Turkish; one hundred twenty-one (99.2 percent) reported their marital status as single. English was the predominant foreign language spoken by the students (85.3 percent), followed by Arabic (8.8 percent), and German (6.4 percent).

Ninety-four (75.8 percent) students indicated dentistry was their first choice during matriculation examinations. Of the thirty students whose first choice was not dentistry, twenty-three (75.8 percent) had selected medicine as their initial preference for higher education, followed by other branches (16.7 percent) and pharmacy (6.7 percent). Twenty-nine (24 percent) students had a first degree relative who was a dentist, whereas twenty-two (33.9 percent) had a first degree relative in a medical branch other than dentistry. Sixty-one (45.1 percent) indicated that they were of Marmara origin, while the others had different region of the living.

Data regarding the students' type of residence showed that sixty-eight (54.8 percent) lived with their families. Eighty three (67.5 percent) were graduates of a state high school where students are selected after a common entrance exam i.e. Anatolian high schools, Anatolian teacher high schools, or science high schools, whereas thirteen (10.6 percent) were graduates of private high schools, some of which select their students according to the results of a common entrance examination, and five students (4.1 percent) graduated from state high schools where students are not selected after a common entrance exam. Twenty-one students (17.1 percent) were graduated from abroad high schools.

Table 1 shows the reasons for choosing dentistry by male and female students. When the responses to questions regarding the reason for choosing dentistry were evaluated, it was determined that the reputation and lifestyle provided by the profession seemed to be the predominant reason (83.9 percent), followed by finding a job easily (77.4 percent). Financial opportunities of the profession (71.8 percent), interest in a dentistry (67.7-percent), were also highly contributing factors to the students' decision about selecting dentistry as a career.

Table 2 shows the level of influence of other individuals on male and female students in the selection of dentistry as a career. 82.3 percent of students indicated that being a dentist was their personal decision. First degree relatives (mother and father) had the greatest influence on the students for choosing dentistry as a career, while fathers and mothers had a similar impact on the students' choice of dental profession (46 percent and 47.6 percent, respectively). This was followed by a relative or a family friend (21.8 percent), a family dentist (14.5 percent), high school teacher (5.6 percent), other factors (6.5 percent) and Biruni University introduction days (4.8 percent). It seems that personal decision was a dominant and these other individuals did not seem to have a very significant effect on decision of students in the selection of the dental profession.

Regarding to the degree of influence of gender on the type of residence of the students, it was found that the gender had a significant influence on the type of residence of the students in the present study.

**Table 1: Motivations of male and female students for choosing dentistry as a profession, by percentage of respondents at each level.**

Motivation	Gender	1	2	3	4 - 5	p-value
Interest in the content of the profession	Female	9.2%	2.6%	18.4%	69.7%	0.309 $\chi^2(3)=3.595$
	Male	6.2%	10.4%	18.8%	64.6%	
	Total	8.1%	5.6%	18.5%	67.7%	
Reputation and lifestyle provided by the profession	Female	2.6%	0%	11.8%	85.5%	0.599 $\chi^2(3)=1.87$
	Male	4.2%	2.1%	12.5%	81.2%	
	Total	3.2%	0.8%	12.1%	83.9%	
Financial opportunities of the profession	Female	5.3%	2.6%	21.1%	71.1%	0.366 $\chi^2(3)=3.17$
	Male	12.5%	2.1%	12.5%	72.9%	
	Total	8.1%	2.4%	17.7%	71.8%	
Working independently and being one's own boss	Female	11.8%	7.9%	17.1%	63.1%	0.778 $\chi^2(3)=1.77$
	Male	18.8%	6.2%	16.7%	58.3%	
	Total	14.5%	7.3%	16.9%	61.3%	
Finding a job easily	Female	5.3%	1.3%	11.8%	81.6%	0.445 $\chi^2(3)=2.67$
	Male	10.4%	4.2%	14.6%	70.8%	
	Total	7.3%	2.4%	12.9%	77.4%	
Job opportunities with regular working hours provided by the profession	Female	15.8%	11.8%	21.1%	51.3%	0.538 $\chi^2(3)=2.22$
	Male	12.5%	18.8%	27.1%	41.7%	
	Total	14.5%	14.5%	23.4%	47.6%	

Note: Respondents ranked the influence of each motivation from 1=no influence to 5=significant influence

**Table 2. Influence of others on male and female students' decision to select dentistry as a career, by percentage of respondents at each level.**

Motivation	Gender	1	2	3	4 - 5	p-value
Personal decision	Female	2.6%	1.3%	13.2%	82.9%	0.791 $\chi^2(3)=1.04$
	Male	2.1%	4.2%	12.5%	81.2%	
	Total	2.4%	2.4%	12.9%	82.3%	
Father	Female	22.45	7.9%	30.3%	39.5%	0.264 $\chi^2(3)=3.98$
	Male	20.8%	4.2%	18.8%	56.2%	
	Total	21.8%	6.5%	25.8%	46.0%	
Mother	Female	17.1%	7.9%	30.3%	44.7%	0.580 $\chi^2(3)=1.97$
	Male	12.5%	12.5%	22.9%	52.1%	
	Total	15.3%	9.7%	27.4%	47.6%	
Relative or family friend	Female	39.5%	14.5%	21.1%	25.0%	<b>0.020</b> $\chi^2(3)=9.88$
	Male	54.2%	25.0%	4.2%	16.7%	
	Total	45.2%	18.5%	14.5%	21.8%	
Family dentist	Female	65.8%	2.6%	15.8%	15.8%	0.451 $\chi^2(3)=3.68$
	Male	77.1%	4.2%	6.2%	12.5%	
	Total	70.2%	3.2%	12.1%	14.5%	
A teacher in high school	Female	69.7%	6.6%	14.5%	9.2%	<b>0.023</b> $\chi^2(3)=9.51$
	Male	91.7%	4.2%	4.2%	0%	
	Total	78.2%	5.6%	10.5%	5.6%	
Biruni University introduction days	Female	86.8%	6.6%	2.6%	3.9%	0.590 $\chi^2(3)=1.91$
	Male	89.6%	4.2%	0%	6.2%	
	Total	87.9%	5.6%	1.6%	4.8%	
Other	Female	82.9%	0%	9.25	7.9%	0.179 $\chi^2(3)=4.91$
	Male	87.5%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	
	Total	84.7%	1.6%	7.3%	6.5%	

Note: Respondents ranked the influence of each motivation from 1=no influence to 5=significant influence

## DISCUSSION

Private foundation dental schools are somewhat as of late settled foundations in Turkey. These dental schools constitute important parts in the education of dentists to meet the dental prerequisites of the nation. The present study included dental students who attended Biruni University, Faculty of Dentistry in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 academic years. As Biruni University was settled in 2014, these students are first dental students of Biruni University. The purpose of the present study was to determine factors associated to selection dentistry as a career by these students and knowledge on the others who most influenced the selection of this career.

The male to female ratio in this study was 1:1.58, which indicates an increase in the number of female students in dentistry in Turkey. A previous study stated that the male to female ratio of working dentists through Turkey was 1:0.69 [13]. The greater number of female students admitted to the private foundation dental school in the present study may be associated to factors, for instance preference of the female students to enroll in private schools or preference of their families in sending their daughters to a private organization, expecting that this will provide a more satisfying setting.

It has been recommended that significance of factors affecting students in picking dentistry may vary between the genders [5,12]. It has been reported that men were more worried than women with the wage and job opportunities of dentistry [14]. However, the findings of the present study state that no significant difference was noted in terms of financial status of the dentistry between genders. This finding was consistent with the previous report of demographic profile of students enrolled in a Turkish private dental school [13]. On another hand, the wage and job opportunities of dentistry was not the highest ranked reason for the selection of dentistry for both genders (71.8% in total) in the present study. It followed the reputation and lifestyle provided by profession (83.9% in total) and finding a job easily in dentistry (77.4% in total). This may imply that students enrolled a private foundation dental school in which students' educational costs are not secured by the government would have not too much care about financial topics, their main concern about the selection of the profession would be having a profession with desirable reputation and lifestyle such as a dentistry.

Family dependencies of the dental students in the present study was similar to those reported by Marino et al. [15] in that 52.1 percent of the students were in Istanbul with their families. This may be related to the students' inability to afford a home by themselves. However, the features of family relations in Turkish culture could significantly contribute this finding. It was found that the gender had a significant influence on the type of residence of the students in the present study. This probably is a result of the general tradition for Turkish children, especially for girls to live with their parents until marriage in Turkey.

The present study found that influences of others on student's choice of dentistry as a profession were not stronger than personal decisions of students, independently from gender. Data indicated that 82.3% of students rated personal decision had a significant influence on their career selection, followed by mothers' and father's influences (52.1% and 46% respectively). The significant influence of personal decision in picking dentistry by students would indicate that most of students did not go to foundation dental school by chance and without having major data about the profession. This also may enable a successful interaction between students and teachers [16]. Interestingly, data showed that the influences of relative or family friend and teacher at the high school on female students' selection were significantly stronger when compared to male students, respectively. Further studies should be conducted to reveal the factors would contribute to these differences between genders.

Universities, especially private foundation universities organize introduction days with the aim of advertising themselves to the students during university selection days after the public university entry examination. However, influences of these activities on career selection of the students who already selected to attend to dental school were determined as very limited in the literature [17], and similar limited influence of Biruni introduction days on student's decision was found in this study. The possible explanation for this would be that dentistry should have already high reputation among society and would not need an additional advertising. Another possible explanation would be that, students who selected to go to dental school generally make decision by personally and not too open to influences of others. Therefore, university administrations should be re-consider the importance of organizing introduction days for dentistry in the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study show that dentistry is maintaining its respectable place between dental students at the Turkish foundation school. This study had a rather small group of dental students and might not be enough to support any prevailing decisions for future dentists of Turkey; nevertheless, this study could be considered as a descriptive survey with the aim of drawing the outlines of motivations for selecting dentistry and sociodemographic features at the Turkish foundation dental school.

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