

The Impact and Perspicacity of National Eligibility cum Entrance Test among Dental Undergraduates in India

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Abstract

Background: National eligibility cum entrance test (NEET) was first proposed in the Vision 2015 by Board of Governors (BOGs) in India. This exam was supposed to be a single window for admissions into medical colleges and dental colleges. NEET-UG (Undergraduate) was put into action in order to reduce stress of multiple examinations which was conducted in different states within India. **Aim:** The aim of this study is to assess the impact of National eligibility cum entrance test (NEET) among the first and second year undergraduates studying in various dental colleges in Chennai, India, qualified through the NEET examination. **Materials and Method:** A cross sectional questionnaire study was conducted among 17 to 22 year old dental undergraduate students. 110 participants were recruited by simple random sampling. A pre tested self-administered questionnaire was distributed to all the participants and data were obtained about NEET. Data was collected during the period of September to October 2017. Descriptive statistics and SPSS version 23.0 was used to analyze the data. **Results:** Out of the total 110 participants, 55 (50%) were males and 55 (50%) were females. 71(64.5%) chose dentistry by choice. 75 (68.2%) studied state board syllabus. A significant p value (0.005) was obtained while assessing the association between difficulty of NEET and efficiency of syllabus. **Conclusion:** It is evident to a certain extent that the system has attained stability and the admission procedures have become easy and transparent for the students as well as for the institutions.

Keywords: Dentistry, NEET, Syllabus, Career

Introduction

The choice of dentistry or rather career is one of the most important decisions of one's life. The students have many career options and it is extremely difficult to choose the best one out of them which would satisfy their passion, income, increase their credibility and respect in the society. [1] Choosing a Professional career or a 'White collar Job' always kept motivating the students in choosing dental education.

"The Joy of providing beautiful smiles on earth is one of the important accomplishments of a dentist which cannot be measured". [2]

The Motives for choosing dentistry is multifactorial which includes financial rewards, secured life, social status, credibility, nature of the occupation, interest and passion in research field, familial interest etc. [3]

So what is dentistry?

Dentistry is a rewarding profession where we get to help others and regularly change people's lives for the better. Dentists play an equal role concerning your health alike your family doctor by looking after your general oral health instead of specializing in a specific area.

NEET-UG (Undergraduate) was put into action in order to reduce stress of multiple examinations, to ensure minimum competence and more importantly with the purpose to weed out corruption in medical education across the country. NEET-UG was first proposed in the Vision 2015 by Board of Governors (BOGs) appointed

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after by Government of India after dissolution of medical council of India (MCI). This exam was supposed to be a single window for entry into a medical college and dental colleges across India.^[4]

NEET-UG replaced the All India Pre Medical Test (AIPMT) and all individual exams conducted by states or colleges themselves for admissions. However, many colleges and institutes took a stay order and conducted their own private examinations for admission to courses. Nevertheless, many other reputed institutes such as the Armed Forces Medical College and Banaras Hindu University have opted to admit students on the basis of the NEET-UG now.^[4]

The least that is expected to happen through NEET is to identify the best possible candidates who have the right skills for science and an attitude for hardwork. There is also a need for uniform distribution of the limited seats, which are in such high demand year after year. These could possibly be the fundamental reasons to seek National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) across the country.^[5]

Before National eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) came into action, the system was lacking transparency in admission procedures.^[6] As NEET came into effect, the pathways were opened up to question the validity of other qualifying exams conducted by state governments and private institutions. On the other hand, the conflicts arise due to insufficient syllabus, difficulty in attempting the exam for students, favorable to particular board of education was also seen among the students. There is a mixed reaction toward NEET, whether it is the ideal gateway to get admission in colleges.

In the era of modern education which is mainly knowledge based to lead an economic life, a person has to clearly show the required skills to lead a healthy professional life.^[7]

Inspite of various exams and boards of education owing to test the person, the need for a single portal has always been a void in education system of India. Dental schools, on the other hand requires a proper medium to decide, if the student is eligible or has the skill to get admitted in their respective dental schools. So, it is inevitable for the society to depend on Knowledge and skill based qualifying exam.

The aim of this study is to assess the impact of National eligibility cum entrance test (NEET) among the

first and second year undergraduate students studying in various dental colleges in Chennai, Tamilnadu, qualified through the NEET examination conducted in the academic year of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

Materials and Method

The present cross-sectional questionnaire study was conducted among the NEET qualified candidates who had successfully affiliated themselves to undergraduate (Bachelor of Dental Surgery) degree.

The sample size was conscripted to 110 students based on simple random sampling among the students pursuing the undergraduate dental degree among various dental colleges in Chennai. The samples were recruited within the age interval of 17-21 years. The sample included 55 male and 55 female undergraduate dental students who gave concern to participate in the study. This study was conducted during the period of September to October 2017.

The inclusion criteria included all the candidates who are pursuing BDS after their admission in the academic year of 2016 and 2017 and who gave consent to participate in this study. Candidates who did not give concern to participate in the study, who did not fill the questionnaire were excluded from the study. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board, Department of Public Health Dentistry, SRM Dental College, Chennai.

A self-administered pre-tested questionnaire containing 14 questions was given to all sample recruited for the study. The first 11 questions were close ended and final 3 questions were open ended. Sociodemographic details of the participants like name, age, gender, address were collected. Close ended questions were about asked about the state, need for NEET in vernacular language, state influence on NEET, Efficiency of the standard twelve syllabus, need for coaching centers, fees structure after NEET etc. Open ended questions were used to know the overall opinion of the student about NEET.

The questionnaire was administered to all the 110 participants in person and the data was collected. The questionnaire consisted of demographic details (Name, age, and gender), their opinion on NEET examination, the influence of syllabus and state which they studied, and their outlook of dentistry.

Descriptive statistics was done and the association was assessed using Pearson's Chi Square test. Statistics was done using SPSS version 23.0 and the p-value was set at 0.05.

Results

The study was done to assess the impact of National eligibility cum entrance test (NEET) among the first and second year students studying in various dental colleges in Chennai, Tamilnadu qualified through the NEET examination conducted in the academic year of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

Table 1: Distribution of participants based on choice of dentistry, need for coaching center and productivity of syllabus

		N	PERCENTAGE (%)
1. Choice of Dentistry	Choice	39	35.5
	Chance	71	64.5
2. Productivity of syllabus	Sufficient	43	39.1
	Insufficient	49	44.5
	Indifferent	14	12.7
	Others	4	3.6
3. Need for coaching centre	Needed	28	25.5
	Not needed	19	17.3
	Needed but expensive	57	51.8
	Expensive not needed	6	5.5

Table 1 shows distribution of participants based on Choice of dentistry, need for coaching center and productivity of syllabus and difficulty of NEET. Totally 55 females and 55 males participated in the study. 71(64.5%) answered that they chose dentistry by chance and 39(35.5%) answered that dentistry was their choice. 75 (68.2%) studied state board syllabus, followed by students who studied CBSE, 29(26.4%) and students who studied in ICSE and other medium of studies were

equal in number. 49 (44.5%) of them reported that the syllabus is insufficient to attempt NEET whereas 43(39.1%) of them reported that the syllabus what they studied is sufficient enough to attempt NEET. 57 (51.8%) reported that a coaching center for NEET is needed but it is expensive and only 6(5.5%) participants feel that it is expensive and not needed. 47(42.7%) participants reported that the difficulty of NEET is medium whereas 42(38.2%) feel that it is hard.

TABLE 2: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PRODUCTIVITY OF SYLLABUS AND NEED FOR COACHING CENTER

Need for coaching centre	Productivity of Syllabus				Total	P value
	Sufficient	Insufficient	Indifferent	Others		
Needed	15	11	1	1	28	0.08
Not needed	9	7	3	0	19	
Needed but expensive	17	30	7	3	57	
Expensive not needed	2	1	3	0	6	
Total	43	49	14	4	110	

Table 2 shows association between productivity of syllabus and need for coaching center. Majority of the participants, 30(27.3%) feel that the efficiency of the syllabus is insufficient to take up NEET and a coaching center is needed but it is expensive. 17 (15.5%) participants feel that the efficiency of the syllabus what they studied is sufficient but still a coaching center is needed but is expensive. On the other hand 15(13.6%) participants said that the efficiency of their syllabus is sufficient but a coaching center is needed for them to attempt NEET.

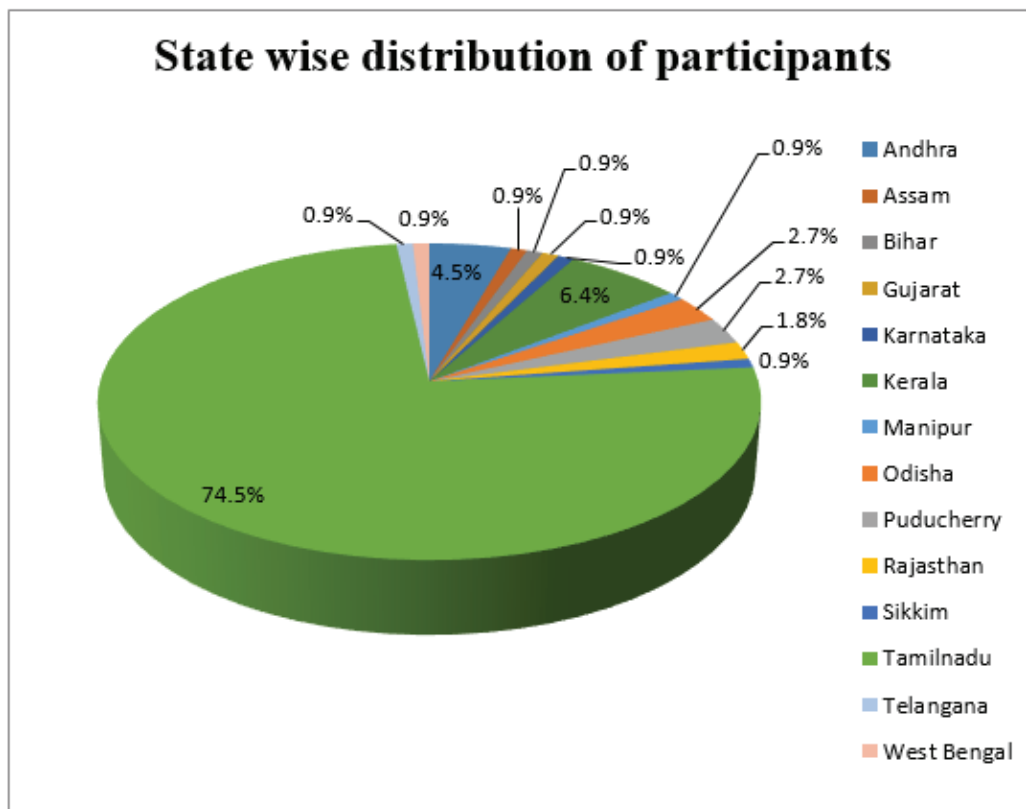


Figure 1: State Wise Distribution of Participants

Figure 1 shows state wise distribution of participants. Majority of them were from Tamil Nadu 82 (42.5%), followed by Kerala 7(6.4%), Andhra 5 (4.5%), Orissa and Pudhucherry 3 (2.7%), Rajasthan 2(1.8%) and then others states 1(0.9%).

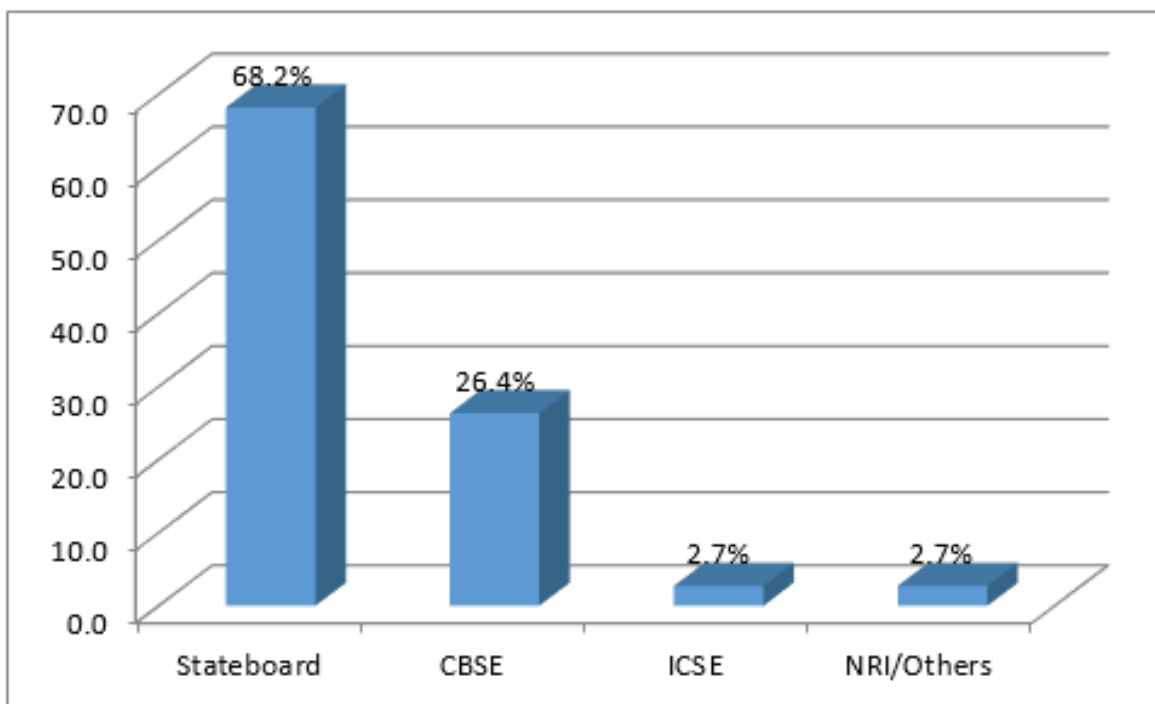


Figure 2: Distribution of Participants According to Syllabus of Study

Figure 2 shows distribution of participants according to their syllabus of study. 75 (68.2%) participants studied stateboard syllabus, 29 (26.4%) studied CBSE, 3 (2.7%) studied ICSE and 3 (2.7%) NRI/others.

Discussion

Although there are many fields in medical sciences, over the past few years, reasons behind students choosing dentistry as a profession have not been well documented by dentists or any others, especially in the developing countries. The motivational factors that influence students in entering dentistry, as well as the selection procedures, vary considerably between countries and even within a single country even between states. These situations pose great responsibility on dental colleges to select the appropriate applicants, both professionally and socially, for the ultimate benefit of the country. [8]

A study done by Kobale et al stated that, majority of students who choose dentistry as their carrier, because of someone encouraging them to do so in their family particularly in India. [9]

Before NEET (National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test) the admission to dental course lacked transparency. But now the system has attained some stability. Students who qualify in the NEET can only be admitted in the

dental colleges.

The result of a study done by Rashmi et al found that 38.83% participants first choice was dentistry but in contradiction 64% participants in the present study chose dentistry by chance. [3]

According to a study done by Priya et al, the various reasons for the students dentistry were inability to get medical seat, 224 graduates (47%) followed by choice out of own interest, 175(37%) and family pressure, 76(16%). [1]

A study done among Iranian dental students, revealed that 93.2% students opted dentistry in their initial selection. Among these 82.5% chose it because they feel dentistry is a job which is an insurer of financial independence. [10] In a study done by Anbuselvan et al in Tamilnadu, majority of the students opted dentistry out of self interest. [7]

In one another study which was done among first year dental students, the reason for the students to select dentistry as their career was that it has regular working hours than other health related professions and they can make more money. [11] In a study done by Gallagher et al, 91% of the dental students said that they chose dentistry because of regular working hours. [12]

A significant results (p value=0.0005) was obtained in the present study in correlation of difficulty of NEET and the efficiency of the syllabus which the participant studied. Table 3 shows that, Majority of them (25 participants) feel that efficiency of the syllabus is insufficient so it was hard to attempt NEET. The quality of the syllabus must be improved to help the students. A universal syllabus system can be made so that all the students will get sufficient knowledge out of their own syllabus itself to attempt NEET.

When a question was put forward to the participants on their overall opinion about NEET, we got a mixed response. Few participants answered it is not useful whereas some answered it as it will be useful if all the students in India follow the same syllabus. Other few commented that it's a confusing fact.

Limitations of Study

Since the study was done in private dental colleges, all the participants were from private schools, none were from government schools. The level of difficulty of NEET would be different for a government school student than a private school student, which was not elicited in the study. Perception of postgraduates who came through NEET-PG was not assessed because it was beyond the scope of study. First and second year undergraduate students who took up the NEET exam in the year 2016 and 2017 only were included in the study because they are the students who will know the impact of NEET.

Recommendations

Students in India study different syllabus namely state board, CBSE, ICSE etc. but the syllabus of NEET is different. So there is a difficulty between different syllabus students to attempt NEET. Government school students find it more difficult because of lack of proper coaching. So the syllabus of NEET examination must be standardized to help each and every student be it government or private schools. Separate coaching for NEET can be encouraged in schools to improve the student's performance in NEET.

Conclusion

This was the first study which was conducted to analyze the pre and post NEET changes and opinion of the students among various dental colleges in Chennai. Although there was a mixed response about NEET in

the present study, it is slightly evident that the system has attained stability and the admission procedures have become easy and transparent for the students as well as for the institutions. The coaching centers can provide good quality coaching for reasonable fees for the needy students in order to sort this issue. The syllabus can be standardized all over India so that all the students get the equal opportunity to prepare for NEET and to crack it.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

Ethical Clearance: Obtained from Ethical Clearance Board of SRM Dental College

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