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A Qualitative Study of Career Motivations and Career Expectations of Malaysian Dental Therapist: Post New Dental Regulations

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Abstract

Objectives: To explore the Malaysian dental therapists' perceptions regarding the provisions concerning them in the new dental act and potential market changes, considering their current career motivations and expectations. **Methods:** Dental therapists from two major public dental organisations in the East-Peninsular Malaysia (n = 26) were invited to participate in an audiotaped semi-structured interview using a pre-tested topic-guide informed by workforce policy and research literature. The qualitative data were transcribed and analysed using Framework Analysis. **Results:** The research conducted with dental therapists (n = 26) identified four motivation domains namely 'altruism', 'personal and academic inspiration', 'profession characteristics' and 'career advising and social influences' as key factors motivating their choice of a professional career as dental therapists, influenced by work-life balance and financial stability. They were also aware of the new dental act and its potential implications, particularly regarding their future career expectations. The majority felt the necessity 'to improve their skills and knowledge' within the first 5 years as part of their short-term career plans. A few participants expressed a desire to 'pursue a higher level of education' and 'wished to join the private sector' in the long-term. They perceived the possibility of 'working in the private sector' to increase their income and believed that they did not require any additional training for such a transition. **Conclusion:** Malaysian dental therapists welcomed the changes in the new act, which allow them to work across sectors. Many perceived themselves as adequately motivated and equipped to transition to different work settings without requiring additional training. © 2024 John Wiley & Sons A/S. Published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Author Keywords

career expectations; career motivation; dental therapists; dental workforce

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