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Initiating gender mainstreaming in dentistry

Good oral health plays a crucial role for general health and human well-being. Therefore, dental manpower planning is very important from dental education, postgraduate year training program, specialty training program, and even the practice geographical distribution. In Taiwan, there are three main dentist manpower problems such as the potential saturation, the imbalanced of regional distribution, and highly located urbanization. However, the extracted database and website did not exhibit the ratio of gender distribution. The critical issue of gender mainstreaming has not been reported so far. Gender mainstreaming is worth to be valued and emphasized in current dental environment.

The concept of gender mainstreaming was first introduced at the Nairobi World Conference on Women in 1985. The definition of gender mainstreaming by the Council of Europe is “The (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.”

In addition, gender equity is presented as goal 5 of the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. Gender-specific data collection and gender equally in decision-making are the hot issues of gender mainstreaming. However, there is limited descriptive and analytical information on gender mainstreaming in dentistry.

For our opinions, the first step to implement gender mainstreaming in dentistry is the disclosure of demographic data with gender ratio to pubic. Recently, the authors asked Taiwan Dental Association about the gender ratio of current registered dentists. The reply show that the number of male and female dentists was 11,188 and 4937 in March, 2022, respectively. Only 30.62% dentists are women. The male-to-female ratio was approximately 2.27. The ratio of gender distribution might be the additional dentist manpower problem in Taiwan. This finding is worth to further investigation.

Empowering women dentists in decision-making position is also important in the fields of dental boards, research, and academia. For example, a bibliometric study reported that Journal of Dental Sciences is one of the most prestigious dental journals and the only one dental journal with impact factor in Taiwan. Unfortunately, the presence of women in editorial committees including editor-in-chief, associate editors, executive editors, and editorial board is only 19.23% (5/26) from the journal’s website. Gender imbalance is clearly notable. It would be important in long-term tracking the gender mainstreaming in editorial committees. In additional, the further research of the gender composition of editorial committees of other leading dental journals is warranted.

SDG5 is aimed to achieve gender equity and empower all women and girls. The purpose of gender mainstreaming is to benefit both women and men. It does not only decrease inequality but also enhance gender equality. Dentists as the intellectual social elites need to act as the bellwether in the field of gender mainstreaming. Currently, it is still a long way to go. Gender mainstreaming acts as a good tool for promoting gender equality. Further demographic characteristics surveys such as gender pay gap, specialties, work patterns, and scholarly productivity are required for the analysis of gender mainstreaming in dentistry.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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