

ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTION AND PREFERENCES OF PARENT'S AND CHILDREN'S TOWARDS THEIR DENTIST AND DENTAL TREATMENT: A QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

Srikala Bhandary¹, Elaine AngZuo Mei², Urvashi A Shetty³

1. Reader, Department of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry, A.B.Shetty Memorial Institute of Dental Sciences, Nitte University, deralakatte, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

2. BDS graduate, B. Shetty Memorial Institute of Dental Sciences, Nitte University, Deralakatte, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

3. Lecturer, Department of Oral Pathology and Microbiology, B. Shetty Memorial Institute of Dental Sciences, Nitte University, Deralakatte, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT:

Background : In dental practice, most children are unco-operative during dental treatment and at times, it is very challenging to manage a child in the dental clinic. For some children, dental visit is not a special event, but it might be a frightening experience for others and they will only go through it, when the pain associated with a dental problem becomes intolerable. Objectives: To assess the perception and preferences of parents and children towards their dentist and dental treatment.

Materials and methods: A total of 200 parents and their children between 5-14 years were chosen for the study who has already undergone or were undergoing dental treatment and a simple pre-structured questionnaire was distributed to the parents along with their children.

Results: Our study showed 74.5% of children who visited dentist earlier, 53(26.5%) said they like visiting dentist and 45(22.5%) said they were afraid of dental treatment and 9(4.5%) children said they don't like visiting dental office. Almost all the parents preferred their child's dental treatment to be done in their presence. 112(56%) of the children said they like the traditional white coat, 37(18.5%) liked formal attire, 29(14.5%) said they want their dentist to wear colored uniform with cartoon images.

Conclusion: Oral health can be promoted if all the dental professionals have thorough knowledge of fears, perceptions and preferences of their patients so as to meet the needs of the patients and deliver quality care in a manner that reduces anxiety and improves comfort.

Key words: perception, preferences, dentist attire, dentist, attire



INTRODUCTION:

In dental practice, most children are unco-operative during dental treatment and at times, it is very challenging to manage a child in the dental clinic.^[1] For some children, dental visit is not a special event, but it might be a frightening experience for others and they will only go through it, when the pain associated with a dental problem becomes intolerable. Fear of dentists and the dental management has been considered as an obstacle to the quality

of dental care delivered.^[2] Surveys show approximately 5% to 6% of the population and 16% of school age children possess a fear of dentists.^[3] The terms anxiety and dental fear used often used synonymously.^[4] and considered as the major cause for problems related to behavior management and hence avoiding dental care.^[5]

It is essential for pediatric dentists to institute a comfortable and

approachable association with young patients, particularly children, so as to fight patient anxiety and to provide active and proficient treatment. This demands, reasoning children's attitudes and preferences toward their dentists to obtain effective optimistic changes or modifications that would make children more relaxed in a dental setup so that the quality of dental visits are improved. In pediatrics, concepts of 'clown doctors' have been effective in handling children's anxiety preoperatively.^[6] Building a strong bond on the child's first dental visit aids to craft a relaxed atmosphere where they will not feel threatened.^[7] Children often come to conclusions about their dentist based on their looks and remember and scrutinizes dentist's every gesture, word, and movement through a dental appointment.^[8]

More recently Mistry and Tahmassebi found parents significantly favoring the traditional white coats whereas children significantly preferred the casual casual attire.^[9] Kuscu et al found more children to prefer white coat attire but highlighted the use of a child friendly attire in anxious children.^[10]

Hence the aim of this study was undertaken to assess the perception and preferences of parents and children towards their dentist and dental treatment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

A total of 200 parents and their children between 5-14 years were selected for

the study who attended the Department of Pedodontics and Preventive Dentistry, A B Shetty Memorial Institute of Dental Sciences who has already undergone or undergoing dental treatment. A simple prestructured questionnaire was distributed to the parents along with their children in the waiting area prior to start of treatment. Ethical clearance was obtained from Nitte University ethical committee and an informed consent was obtained from each child's parent both verbally and in the consent form prior to distribution of the questionnaire.

Criteria for selection:

Inclusion criteria

- 1) Parents of children aged between 5-14 years and undergone or undergoing dental treatment
- 2) Cooperative Parents and children who are willing to participate in the study

Exclusion criteria

- 1) Uncooperative parents and children
- 2) Children without parental consent to participate in the study

Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was designed to assess parent's preferences and children's perceptions of their dentists. Parents and children were asked to complete a survey consisting of 20 questions that included general demographic information, parents and children's response to the dental visit, parents and children's perception of their dentist and separate scenarios describing each dental procedures and a written description and diagram was

provided for each scenario and also the clinical attire depiction. Five statements enumerated children's preferences of how they wanted their dentists be dressed, accompanied with photographs of dentists wearing alternative attires.

Statistical analysis: Descriptive analysis was done.

RESULTS:

A total of 200 parents and their children participated in the survey. As shown in (Table1), the sample showed that 126 (63%) of parents were females and 74 (37%) males and most parents 120 (60%) were between 31 and 40 years old (Table 1). 118 (59%) of the children were females and 82(41%) males and most children 165 (82.5%) were between 7 to 14 years (Table 1). 149(74.5%) of the children had undergone dental treatment at least once before this appointment and 51(25.5%) of the children came for their first dental visit. Of the 74.5% of children who visited dentist earlier, 53(26.5%) said they like visiting dentist and 45(22.5%) said they were afraid of dental treatment and 9(4.5%) children said they don't like visiting dental office (Table 2). 73(36.5%) of the parents preferred female dentists to treat their child and 59(29.5%) preferred male and 68(34%) said they don't have any particular preferences (Table 3) while 101(50.5%) of the children also preferred female dentist and 83(41.5%) preferred male and 16(8%) did not have any such preference (Table 3).

Almost all the parents said they would prefer to be present during their child's dental treatment. 85 (42.5%) of parents indicated, as the primary reason to remain in the operatory is to see and know the procedures and technique used during treatment and 71 (35.5%) felt that their child is more comfortable in the presence of parents and 40 (20%) said they worry about their child's behavior in the operatory (Table 4). Responses to the same section of the survey showed that 151(75.5%) of the parents wanted to be present for dental examinations and x-ray procedures, 148(74%) for injections, 155(77.5%) for extractions, 144(72%) for fillings and 138(69%) of the parents wanted to be present for conscious sedation procedures (Table 5) and while the same question were asked the children whether they wanted their parents to be present for the above mentioned treatment procedures, 149 (74.5%) said they wanted their parent to be present during dental examination and x-ray procedure, 159 (79.5%) during injections, 160 (80%) during extractions , 148(74%) during filling and 163 (81.5%) wanted their parents to be present if they underwent conscious sedation procedures (Table 5).

When asked whether you Prefer your child's dentist using mouth mask, headcap and protective glasses, 185(92.5%) of the parents said yes and only 15(7.5%) said no (Table 6) but 127(63.5%) of the children said yes to the protective gear and 73(36.5%) said they don't want their dentist to wearing

anything that covered their faces (Table 6). The responses to children's preferences of what should be their dentist's attire showed, majority 112(56%) of the children said they like the traditional white coat, 37(18.5%) liked formal attire, 29(14.5%) said they want their dentist to wear coloured uniform with cartoon images as shown in (Table 6).

DISCUSSION:

To create positive changes and modifications that would make a pediatric dentist look more acceptable for a child, importance must be given to what form of attire will be more preferential. Psychologists highlight the significance of appearance and its effect on the first impressions and interpersonal relationships^[11]

Our study revealed that parents and their children have strong preferences regarding their dentists and the dental visits. According to our study, 149(74.5%) of the children had already visited a dentist and 51(25.5%) of them were visiting for the first time and majority 53(26.5%) reported that they liked their dental visits which was consistent with the results of AlSarheed^[2] However the dental practitioners should be consider the fact that 45(22.5%) children said they are afraid of the dental treatment and 9(4.5%) said they disliked their visit. 101(50.5%) of the children preferred female dentist and 83(41.5%) preferred male dentists which was similar to a studies conducted by AlSarheed.^[2] and

Mistry and Tahmassebi⁹ and reason could be the comfort level of children when treated by the dentist of the same gender.

In the present study, the results demonstrated a clear preference of the parents to be present in the operatory regardless of the specific dental procedure or behavior management techniques being employed. These results were consistent with a study by Rao et al.^[12] and Sulabh Shroff.^[13] and the common reasons given were the parents needed to see how their child responded to treatment and that the children are more comfortable in the presence of parents and the children also felt the same.

The study showed that 185(92.5%) of the parents preferred their child's dentist wear protective cross infection gear but only 127(63.5%) of the children wanted the same which was similar to studies done by AlSarheed.^[2] and by Asli Patir Munevveroglu ^[1] where 70.5% of the children preferred their dentist wearing protective gear. Children maybe frightened by the protective attire like the masks and eye glasses and maybe ignorant of the purpose behind their use. We can reduce the anxiety of pediatric patients, by explaining why these devices are used.

This study revealed that more than half of the children 112(56%) had a preference of their dentist wearing the traditional white coat which was consistent with a study done by Mc

Carthy et al.^[14] This maybe because children consider formally dressed dentist as more professional and concerned and the second choice 37(18.5%) was coloured uniforms with cartoon images and the last choice was formal attire 29(14.5%) which support the findings of study done by kuscu et al.^[15]

Our result highlights the significance of ensuring that children are calm and happy during the dental visit and have a positive experience. Children having negative impression are likely to spread these to others which is a challenge to overcome especially if it becomes the first perception of the child towards his/her dentist. The purpose of recognizing attitudes of children towards their dentist is to bring about positive change or alterations that would in turn make a dentist's office more relaxing for

children and to enhance the quality of visits to the dental office.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion our study attempted to focus on preferences of Parent's and Children's towards their Dentist and Dental treatment and we found that most parents have a preference to be present in the dental operatory despite the dental procedures. Children had strong preferences about the appearance and look of their dentist, gender and the dentist's attire and also that the children preferred their parents presence during the treatment.

To promote oral health care, all practitioners have to be aware of the preferences, perceptions and worries of their patients so that they can provide excellent care and meet the needs of the patient in a manner that is less stressful .

REFERENCES:

1. Asli Patir Munevveroglu, Beyza Balli Akgol, Tugba Erol. Assessment of the feelings and attitudes of children towards their dentist and their association with oral health.
2. Maha AlSarheed. Children's perception of their Dentists. European Journal of Dentistry. April 2011. Vol 5. 186-190.
3. Friedson E, Feldman JM. The public looks at dental care. J Am Dent Assoc 1956;57: 325-330.
4. A. Gustafsson, "Dental behavior management problems among children and adolescents- a matter of understanding? Studies on dental fear, personal characteristics and psychosocial concomitants," Swedish Dental Journal, vol. 202, pp.2-46,2010.
5. A. Gustafsson, K. Arnrup, A. G. Broberg, L. Bodin, U. Berggren. Psychosocial concomitants to dental fear and behavior management problems. International Journal of Pediatric Dentistry. Vol.17, no.6,pp449-459, 2007.
6. Vijaya Prasad Kamavaram Ellore, Mudasser Mohammed, Mahanthesh Taranath, Naveen Kumar Ramagoni, Vinod Kumar, Gururaj Gunjalli. children and parent's attitude and preferences of Dentist's Attire in

Pediatric Dental Practice. International Journal of Clinical Pediatric Dentistry, may-august 2015;8(2):102-107.

7. Mathewson RJ, Primosh RE. Behavioral and physical assessment.: Fundamentals of Pediatric Dentistry. Quintessence Books. Carol stream, IL: 1995: 7-23.
8. Kleinknecht RA, Klepac RK, Alexander LD. Origins and charecteristics of fear of dentistry. J Am Dent Assoc 1973;86:842-846.
9. Mistry D, Tahmassebi JF. Children’s and parents attitudes towards dentists’ attire. Eur Archs Pediatr Dent 2009;10(4): 237-241.
10. Kuscu OO, Caglar E, Kayabasoglu N, Sandalli. Preferences of dentist’s attire in a group of Istanbul school children related to dental anxiety. Eur Archs Pediatr Dent 2009;10(1): 38-41.
11. Bersheid E, Gangestad S. The social psychological implications of facial physical attractiveness. Clin Plast Surg 1982;9(3):289-296.
12. Arathi R, Ashwini R. parental presence in the dental operatory-parent’s point of view. J Indian Soc Pedod Prev Dent1999;17:150-5.
13. Sulab Shroff, Cody Hughes, Connie Mobley. Attitudes and preferences of parents about being present in the dental operatory. Pediatric Dentistry 2015;37(1): 51-55.
14. Mc Carthy JJ, Mc Carthy MC, Eilert RE. Children’s and parents visual perception of physicians. Clin Pediatr 1999; 38(3):145-152.
15. Kuscu OO,Caglar E, Kayabasoglu N, Sandalli. Preferences of dentists attire in a group of Istanbul school children related dental anxiety. Eur Archs Pediatr Dent 2009; 10(1): 38-41.

TABLES:

Table 1:

A) Sociodemographic distribution of parents		Frequency	Percent
Age in years	<20	3	1.5%
	21-30	20	10%
	31-40	120	60%
	41-50	47	23.5%
	>50	10	5%
Gender	Male	74	37%
	Female	126	63%
B) Sociodemographic distribution of children		Frequency	Percent
Age in years	3-6	35	17.5%
	7-10	94	47%
	11-14	71	35.5%
Gender	Male	82	41%
	Female	118	59%

Table 2:

Responses of children to dental visit	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Have you undergone dental treatment before	Yes	149	74.5%
	First visit	51	25.5%
If yes, how did you feel during the treatment	Like it	113	56.5%
	Don't like it	17	8.5%
	Afraid of it	52	26%
How did your sibling feel when visited a dentist	Like it	45	22.5%
	Don't like it	9	4.5%
	Afraid of it	53	26.5%
	Don't know	93	46.5%

Table 3:

A) Parents preference of their child's dentist		Frequency	Percent
Do you prefer your child be treated by a male or female dentist	Male dentist	59	29.5%
	female dentist	73	36.5%
	Any of them	68	34%
B) Child's preference of their dentist		Frequency	Percent
You prefer to be treated by female or male dentist	Male	83	41.5%
You prefer to be treated by female or male dentist	Female	101	50.5%
	Any of them	16	8%

Table 4:

Factors identified by parents to remain in the dental operatory during their child's dental treatment	Frequency	Percentage
To know and see the procedure and technique used for treatment	85	42.5%
Worry about child's behaviour	40	20%
Feeling that child is more comfortable in parents presence	71	35.5%
Unfamiliar relationship with dentist	1	0.5%
Previously unfavourable dental experiences with child	2	1%
Previously unfavourable dental experiences of self	1	0.5%

Table 5:

A) Parents' preference to be present with their child during treatment procedures	Response	Frequency	Percent
Examinations with x-ray	Yes	151	75.5%
	No	49	24.5%
Injections	Yes	148	74%
	No	52	26%
Extractions	Yes	155	77.5%
	No	45	22.5%

Filling	Yes	144	72%
	No	56	28%
Conscious sedation	Yes	138	69%
	No	62	31%
B) Childrens' preference for parent's presence during their treatment procedures Treatment Procedure			
Examinations with x-ray	Response	Frequency	Percent
	Yes	149	74.5%
Injections	No	51	25.5%
	Yes	159	79.5%
Extractions	No	41	20.5%
	Yes	160	80.0%
Filling	No	40	20.0%
	Yes	148	74%
Conscious sedation	No	52	26%
	Yes	163	81.5%
	No	37	18.5%
	Yes		

Table 6

A) Parents' preference for use of protective cross infection gear by the dentist during their child's treatment		Frequency	Percent
Do you prefer your child's dentist using mouth mask, headcap and protective glasses	Yes	185	92.5%
	No	15	7.5%
B) Childrens' preference for use of protective cross infection gear by the dentist during their treatment		Frequency	Percent
Do you prefer your dentist using mouth mask, headcap and protective glasses	Yes	127	63.5%
	No	73	36.5%
C) Children's preferences about their dentist's attire		Frequency	Percent
Traditional white coat		112	56%
Formal attire		37	18.5%
Green OT gown		11	5.5%
T-shirt and jeans		11	5.5%
Coloured uniform with cartoon images		29	14.5%