

Children's preference toward dentist attire in Chennai city

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ABSTRACT

Aim: This study aims to determine the understanding regarding the preference of dentist attire in children. **Objective:** The objective of the study was to create awareness and determine the understanding preference of dentist attire in children. **Materials and Methods:** A convenient sample size of 100 consecutive pediatric patients (9–12 years old) who came to Saveetha Dental College, Chennai, for treatment participated in the study. The data have been collected through questionnaire consisted of 10 questions mainly assessing the types of attire preference of the dentist. The participants were asked to choose the preferred attire of the dentist. Proper instructions were given to the participants to complete the questionnaire before going through dental treatment. **Results:** As an overall result, the children preferred to see their dentist with a white coat and white scarf with a hand watch. **Conclusion:** As a conclusion, the present study showed that the dentists' attire has a significant impact on the children's acceptance of dental treatment. However, the children favored the dentist to be presented in a traditional outfit with a white lab coat. The study results would help the dentist to change their style of dressing on the basis of the patients' preferences.

KEY WORDS: Children anxiety, Formal attire, Surgical scrubs, Traditional wear, White coat

INTRODUCTION

A good relationship between a pediatrician and a patient (child) is a key to high-quality health-care management, especially in pediatric field. Multiple studies that have been conducted proved that association between pediatric patients' satisfaction with their care and health outcomes, including adherence to medication regimens, screening tests, and mortality. One of the important novels approached to improving the pediatric patient experience is through tailoring physician attire to match the patient's expectations for a given clinical care setting.^[1,2]

Most of the studies conducted worldwide reveal that pediatric patients generally preferred the combination of white coat and formal attire to accept the physician as doctor, but they only out of fear or anxiety towards physician who wore more colorful dresses. For example, in a study toward pediatric patients, they rated doctors who dressed in formal attire with a

white coat as competent but not friendly.^[3,4] It is very challenging to gain patient's trust to optimize the most significant healthcare outcomes within the goal of treatment. Therefore, doctors should desire the most beneficial strategies which help gaining patient's trust.^[5]

Doctors' traditional attire was known to be the white coats and ties, but in this era, different types of attire have become common. Well-dressed physician may provide a good impression toward pediatric patient's parents whose contact is an important event and that it takes time to prepare for it, whereas the dishevelled physician can be perceived as unskilled and incurious. In a pediatric population, the appearance of a pediatrician is a crucial element that may affect the trust and the comfort of children.^[6]

In dentistry, a child develops an impression of their dentist before verbal communication based on their appearance. Therefore, it is important to assess the good and bad side of dentist's attire toward a child patient. The attire of the dentist still remains a topic of debate and the choice of dentist's attire influences patient's view of the dentist. Behavior and cooperation

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of a child patient during dental treatment are widely influenced by their age range.^[3,7]

According to a study conducted in Switzerland, a child at an age range of 6–7 years has the potential to improvement ability in resolve his/her own anxiety. Moreover, as the age increases, the child’s thinking process becomes more logical followed by understands others perspective. Usually, dental anxiety begins to reduce by the age of 6–11 years and child’s reaction to dental treatment.^[8] This can be related to the theory given by Erikson which stated that the age range of 6–11 years known as the age of mastery of skills.^[9,10] Dentis’s attire has been a topic of interest as there is a constant variation in the children’s perception on their dentist’s attire.^[11]

However, the dentist’s attire preferences vary according to the child’s age group. Although several studies have assessed, they give an overall preference and the anxiety level of children toward dentist’s attire. However, literature lacks information regarding preference of dentist;s attire according to different age group of children. As there is a variation in preference level indicated in different studies, it is important to evaluate the children’s preference according to their age group and to get an idea of child’s preference according to different age range which was not found in any previous literatures.^[12]

In addition, preference of a child is a must to be taken into view as generally a dental setup will induce anxiety in the child patient. The dentist at least should be lenient in wearing or not wearing the white coat according to the child’s preference while diagnosis the child. However, few dental colleges and hospitals in India are using surgical scrubs as their regular attire in workplace.^[12,13] Therefore, it is important to assess children’s preference level towards surgical scrubs also. Hence, the present study was conducted to assess the relationship between child’s attitude and dentist attire such as white coat, surgical scrubs, and regular outfit in clinic.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A convenient sample size of 100 consecutive pediatric patients (9–12 years old) who came to Saveetha Dental College, Chennai, for treatment participated in the study. The data have been collected through questionnaire consisted of 10 questions mainly assessing the types of attire preference of the dentist. The participants were asked to choose the preferred attire of the dentist. Proper instructions were given to the participants to complete the questionnaire before going through dental treatment. However, guidance was given to the children who found difficulty in completing the questionnaire. The guidance was given

in such way as they were been explained about the questions and about their outfits. This guidance helped the children to answer the questions easily. All the responses were analyzed and recorded.

RESULTS

A total of 100 pediatric patients were participated in this study, aged between 9 and 12 years. Out of 100 participants, 55% of children were male, whereas 45% of children were female, as shown in Figure 1. All of the participated children had visited the hospital with varies chief complains. About 60% of them were unpleasant with the dental visit. Remaining 40% of them were found that the visit was to be a pleasant one. Figure 2 shows majority which was 59% of the participants stated that the attire of dentist was important for them, whereas 19% and 22% stated that dentist attire was “not important” and “very important,” respectively. It was observed that 45% of the participants preferred the dentist to be worn perfume, while 21% of them did not prefer the dentist to wear any perfumes. This is followed by another 34% of participants who had no opinion toward this topic, as shown in Figure 3. According to Figure 4, only 17% of the participants were preferably accepting their dentist wearing any form of jewelleryes. Remaining 57% and 26% of them were not accepting or dislike when their dentists wore jewelleryes and had no opinion on it, respectively. Figure 5 shows 49% of the participants preferred

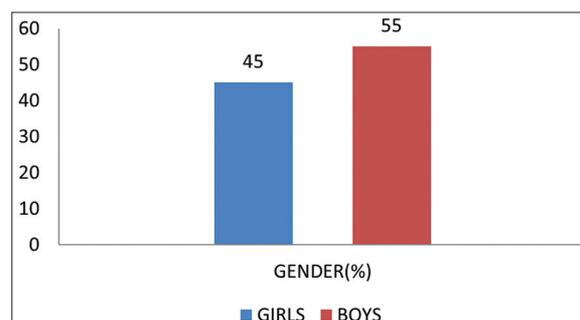


Figure 1: The percentage of participants’ gender

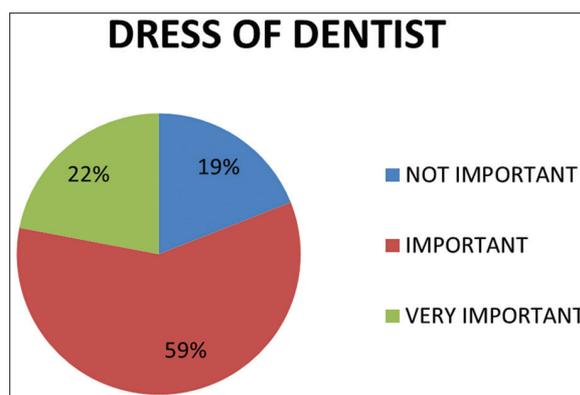


Figure 2: The range of importance of the participants toward the dentists’ dress

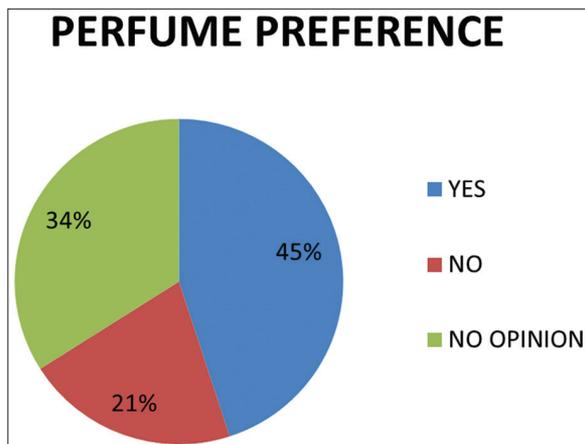


Figure 3: The interest of participants toward the usage of perfume in dentist

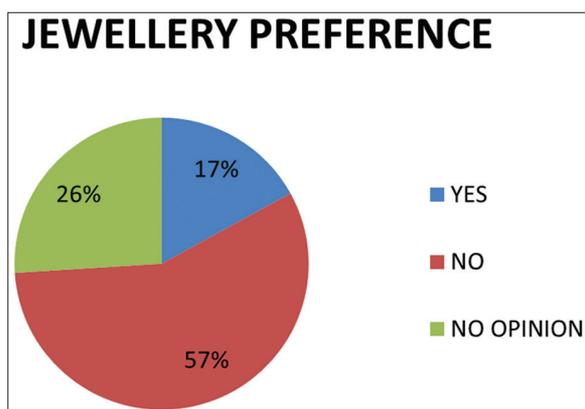


Figure 4: The preference of participants toward the jewellery worn by dentist

their dentist wearing a white coat with a white scarf. Another 29% of them preferred to see their dentist with white coat and black scarf. There were 7% of participants who like to see their dentist in white coat and colorful scarf combination and professional outfit, respectively. Remaining 8% of them chose to see their dentist with surgical scrubs.

About 60% of the participants preferred their dentist to wear a hand watch. Remaining 40% do not like to see their dentist wearing any kind of hand watch. About 70% of the participants preferred a closed toe shoes worn by dentist, whereas flat shoes were preferred by 30% of them. The participants preferred that the dentist should wear which about 15% of them chose proper badges, 80% chose face masks, and 5% chose goggles while treating them.

DISCUSSION

The present cross-sectional study has been conducted for determining the preferences of children toward the attire of the pediatric dentist. The study results have shown that a majority of the children prefer the dentist to dress in traditional attire wearing a white coat with

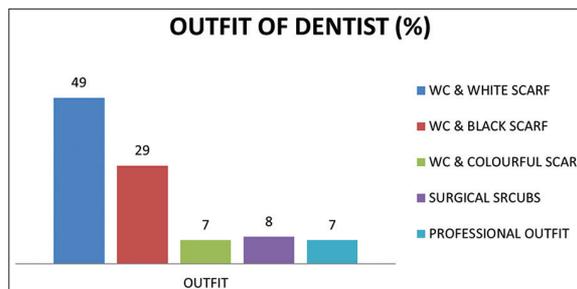


Figure 5: The outfit dentists' outfit preference by participants

a white scarf. Moreover, they prefer the use of plain masks, white gloves, with closed toe shoes, and no jewellery.

This showed that the previous literatures about judgment of children toward dentist are based on their appearance and attire was proven once again. Therefore, a dentist should make a positive adjustment and changes to look present able in front of a child, their patient. Similar to the present study, another study conducted by Alsarheed^[14] stated that children preferred dentist wearing a traditional dress with a white coat.

Pleasant and appealing attire of a dentist helps in reducing the anxiety level among the children and making them feel comfortable is a major factor to be achieved for a dentist to get a good cooperation for the pediatric patient. In the current study, about 49% of the children preferred their dentist to wear a white coat as it looks professional and increases their confidence. These results are consistent with the study conducted by Ravikumar *et al.*,^[15] in which 42.6% of the children preferred their dentist to be worn a white coat while treating them. The surgical scrubs were least preferred by the children which were just 8.9% as they seemed to be scary. It is because the children associate the white coat with as a symbol of healing as indicated in the studies conducted by Patr *et al.*,^[16] Munevveroglu *et al.*,^[17] and Ball *et al.*^[18]

A study conducted by Ellore *et al.*,^[19] also stated that surgical scrubs were least preferred by the dentist as they seemed scary to them. The present study has shown mixed responses from the children about their preferences toward the dentist attire; however, the majority of the children preferred the dentist to wear a traditional white coat. Child dental anxiety is not an extraordinary event, and it has remained a major barrier to dental care among the children. The pediatric fear can be reduced and overcome by developing an interpersonal relationship, and positive interaction with the child as it helps to create a positive and pleasant environment.

In addition, to create a better first impression among anxious children, a dentist should consider child

friendly. A study conducted by Obu *et al.*,^[20] also revealed that majority of the children prefer doctors wearing a white coat and positively reacted to the dentists who wore white coats as compared to doctors with no white coat.

Another study conducted by Asokan *et al.*,^[21] showed that utilizing child-friendly colors in the dentist's attire would help to relieve the dental anxiety and result in better communication and bonding between the dentist and the patient. It is proven that if a dentist dresses up in a professional outfit, it tends to inspire pediatric patients as well as their parents and gives them confidence that this dentist can treat them well. A study conducted by Jafarzadeh *et al.*,^[22] showed that majority of the children were comfortable if the dentist wore formal attire with a name label, gloves, and jewellery.

However, these results were consistent with the present study as the majority of the children stated that they preferred that the dentists wear a proper badge, face masks, and goggles. On the contrary, a study conducted by Tahmassebi *et al.*,^[23] showed a majority of the children preferred their dentist to wear colorful clothes, whereas their parents' preferred doctors wearing formal white coats. The results of the present study have clarified the misconception of white coat syndrome that has resulted in many dentists to avoid wearing their white coats to establish an interpersonal patient-doctor relationship. The description of dentist attire preferred by the majority of the children would help the dentist to improve the child's perception regarding the care they receive.

CONCLUSION

The present study showed that the dentists' attire has a significant impact on the children's acceptance of dental treatment. However, the children favored the dentist to be presented in a traditional outfit with a white lab coat. The study results would help the dentist to change their style of dressing on the basis of the patients' preferences. These changes will help them in improving their perception of the care they receive from the dentist.

However, this study is limited as it is not elaborated between the preferences of male and female children. This study has not analyzed based on other factors such as age and gender on the acceptance of dental treatment provided by the dentist. However, a better understanding of the children preferences can be developed by conducting future studies on a larger sample among different age groups and children should be recruited from different socioeconomic backgrounds

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