

Original Article

Factors affecting patient's desire for seeking orthodontic treatment

ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of this study is to determine the factors which affect a patient's desire for orthodontic treatment.

Objective: The objective of this study is to assess the various reasons and motivating factors for patients to seek orthodontic treatment through a structured questionnaire.

Materials and Methods: The survey was carried out in a population sample of 100 patients using a standard questionnaire before receiving orthodontic treatment. Perceived need for orthodontic treatment was assessed by asking questions to the patients.

Results: Functional need was felt mostly by the males (36%), whereas females felt esthetics to be their major concern (72%). Fifty-three percent of the patients rated their dental appearance as bad and 47% had a teasing experience for protruded teeth. Majority of patients (76%) considered the improvement of general esthetics the most important outcome for seeking orthodontic treatment, whereas 11% sought treatment to improve dental health, 4% to enhance self-confidence, and only 1% to improve chewing and speech.

Conclusion: People who are not satisfied with their appearance are the ones who seek orthodontic treatment. Patient's awareness of their appearance and their satisfaction are important to the orthodontist for patient satisfaction. The patient's motivation in seeking orthodontic treatment should be determined before the treatment commences to increase the chances of success of the orthodontic treatment.

Key words: Motivating factors; orthodontic treatment; reasons.

Introduction

Understanding the factors that determine the need for orthodontic treatment will enable better planning and also better assessment of treatment needs and patient's priorities. Gender, age, intellectual level, social class, severity of the malocclusion, dental care, and self-perception of facial esthetics are found to be associated with the desire to seek orthodontic treatment.^[1] The goals of orthodontic treatment are restoring esthetic impairments, improving oral health, oral function, and enhancing patient's psychosocial well-being. Patients who seek orthodontic treatment are most likely to be concerned with the improvement of their appearance and smile as well as social acceptance in a population.^[2] Various reasons and factors which influence

patients to seek orthodontic treatment, have been published in a number of the previous studies. Social and psychological impact of malocclusion can either be noticed by the patient himself or by other people resulting in low self-esteem, teasing experiences, and dissatisfaction of appearance and may motivate a patient to seek orthodontic treatment.^[3] The reason behind the increasing desire for

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orthodontic treatment should not be underestimated. People who are dissatisfied with their dental appearance may have psychological problems which may impact their social behavior. Self-confidence and higher self-esteem are expressed by people who are satisfied with their teeth. Hence, the desire for orthodontic treatment can be considered as a way to improve dentofacial appearance and also gain self-confidence.^[4] Dental attractiveness plays an important role in seeking orthodontic treatment. The perception of dental attractiveness varies greatly between individuals.^[5] The studies show high correlations between esthetics, need for treatment, and severity of malocclusion in clinical assessments. The desire for orthodontic treatment by individuals who are dissatisfied with their appearance underlies most orthodontic treatments. For this reason, the orthodontist's objective is to improve the function and appearance and to ensure patient satisfaction at the end of treatment. It is, therefore, important for the orthodontist to know the patient's awareness of their appearance and their satisfaction.^[6] This study was to investigate the interrelationships between the factors involved in seeking orthodontic treatment.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Saveetha Dental College and Hospital using a structured questionnaire that consisted of 17 questions. The subjects were patients awaiting orthodontic treatment. A total of 120 patients who were willing to participate in the study were given the questionnaire. The patients aged 15 years and above were considered for this study. The questions and their corresponding options were explained to the patients before they were asked to answer it. The questionnaire assessed various factors such as the frequency of dental check-up, self-satisfaction of facial profile, teasing experiences regarding dental appearance, economic factor, educational status, age, sex, functional defects, perceived outcome of the orthodontic treatment, and patient's perception of malocclusion.

Results

Of the 120 patients that participated in the study, 100 patients completed the questionnaire satisfactorily. Majority of the patients were males (66%). The patients belonged mostly to the 15–29 year age group. Functional need was felt mostly by the males (36%), whereas females felt esthetics to be their major concern (72%) [Table 1]. Among the entire study population, 37% were educated and 71% visited the dentist only when necessary [Table 2]. About 55% of the patients had an economic factor that prohibited

Table 1: Factors motivating patients for treatment

Factor	No.			%
Aesthetic concern	74	Male	42	63.6
		Female	32	72.7
Teasing experience	47			47
Aesthetic concern with teasing experience	54			54
Functional concern	36	Male	24	36.3
		Female	12	27.2

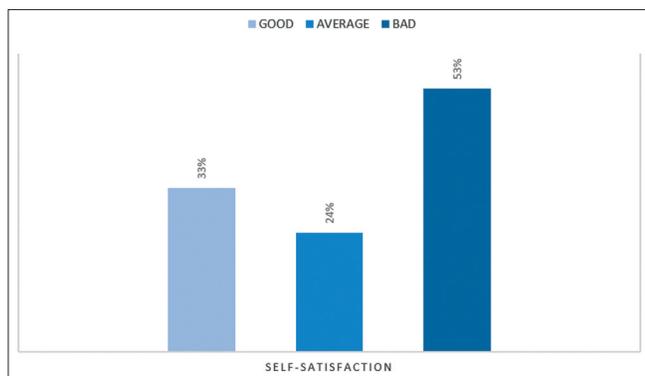
Table 2: Data obtained from the study

Data	No.
Gender	
Male	66
Female	34
Age group	
15-29	62
30-45	38
Educational status	
Literate	37
Illiterate	63
Frequency of dental checkups	
Only when necessary	71
Once a year	29
Every 6 months	0

their treatment. In about 64%, the orthodontic treatment was suggested by their family and friends. Esthetics seemed to be an important factor for seeking treatment as most of the patients stated straighter teeth as a major motivating factor (48%) and general esthetic improvement as a major concern (65%). The experience of teasing regarding their dental appearance seemed to increase their esthetic concern in about 54% [Tables 1 and 2]. Fifty-three percent of the patients rated their dental appearance as bad and 47% had a teasing experience for protruded teeth. Forty seven percent of the total study population was satisfied with their dental appearance [Graph 1]. Functional concern was felt by 36% of the patients [Table 1]. Majority of the patients (76%) considered the improvement of general esthetics, the most important outcome for seeking orthodontic treatment whereas 11% sought treatment to improve dental health, 4% to enhance self-confidence, and only 1% to improve chewing and speech [Graph 2].

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that dentofacial esthetics is the major factor that determines the patient's desire for orthodontic treatment.^[7] Variables such as gender and age were not found to have any significant differences when correlated to the desire for orthodontic treatment. Nevertheless, some patients mentioned reasons as difficulty in swallowing and

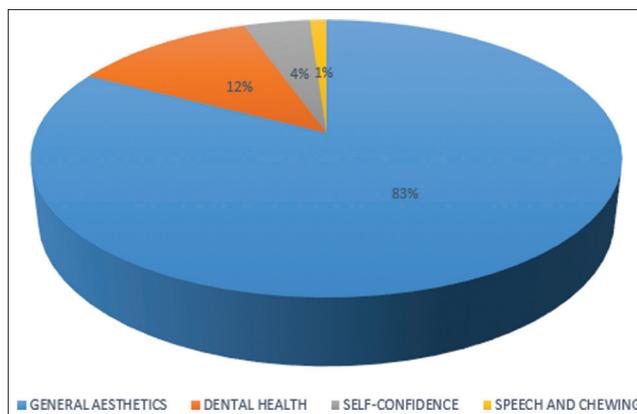


Graph 1: Self-satisfaction of dental appearance

chewing as their desire for seeking orthodontic treatment. Psychological factors are the main reason why patients seek orthodontic treatment, the key factor being an improvement in dental appearance. Most of the patients in the present study visited the dentists only when they had some dental problem. This could be due to low dental awareness of the patients surveyed. The desire to have an improved facial appearance by orthodontic treatment was found to be high in the study group. Dissatisfaction of dental profile was felt by more than half of the population, and it was not affected by gender or age.

Conclusion

People who are not satisfied with their appearance are the ones who seek orthodontic treatment. Patient's awareness of their appearance and their satisfaction are important to the orthodontist for patient satisfaction. Factors such as age and sex can be considered to have some influence on patient's need for orthodontic treatment. It is important to recognize patient's esthetic concerns in planning orthodontic treatment. The patient's motivation in seeking orthodontic treatment should be determined before the treatment commences to increase chances for a mutually satisfying orthodontic treatment result for both the orthodontist and the patient.



Graph 2: Expected improvement by patients after treatment

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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