

Children's Perception towards Pediatric Dentist Attire: An Observation Study

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Abstract

Background: Studies have shown that children have preference towards dentist attire and this can influence their behaviour in dental setup. **Aim:** The present observational study was done to determine the children's preference and their perception toward pediatric dentist attire. **Materials and Methods:** A personal interview was done by a single, qualified pediatric dentist among 450 school children after obtaining approval from the school administrator and child's parents. Children aged between 6 and 12 years were participated in this interview. **Results:** Based on the response, it was observed that most of the children preferred their pediatric dentist to wear white coat and colored scrubs. Children were highly anxious on seeing their dentist with protective wear. **Conclusion:** This can be utilized to improve the friendly relationship between the child and pediatric dentist.

Key words: Dentist attire, scrubs, white coat

INTRODUCTION

Since the time of Hippocrates, the physicians were advised to be well-dressed and clean.^[1] The importance of a person outlook was also highlighted by Psychologists to develop a positive interpersonal relationship.^[2] There continues to be a debate regarding dentists' attire and the choice of a white coat, suit, or scrubs influences patient's view of dentist. Several studies were published regarding children preference toward dentist attire.^[3-10] However, all the studies give an overall view on children's preference level toward white coat, scrubs, formal attire, or a child-friendly attire. It is important to understand the reasons behind their preference for particular attire and it should be on their own views and to their level of understanding. As Jean Piaget had stated that, as the age advances the child way of thinking process becomes more logical and understands others perspective.^[11] Hence, the present observational study was done to assess the children's preference for a particular attire and the reasons behind their likes or dislikes for the same.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An interview was done by a single, qualified pediatric dentist among school children after obtaining concern from the school

administrator and child's parents. Four hundred and fifty children aged between 6 and 12 years were participated in this interview. A series of photographs were shown to children with dentist in different attire. The attire includes white coat, colored scrubs, and formal attire, with and without protective wears such as protective glasses and mask. As the children indicate a preference or dislike for a particular attire, followed by, each child was given a chance to justify their reasons for their likes and dislikes.

RESULTS

Demographic data included 450 children, 232 boys, and 218 girls. Preference level of children towards different attire is depicted in Figure 1. Out of 450 children, 42.6% of children preferred white coat, 41.3% of children preferred colored scrubs and 16% children preferred formal attire. Anxious level toward protective wear is shown in Figure 2. Among

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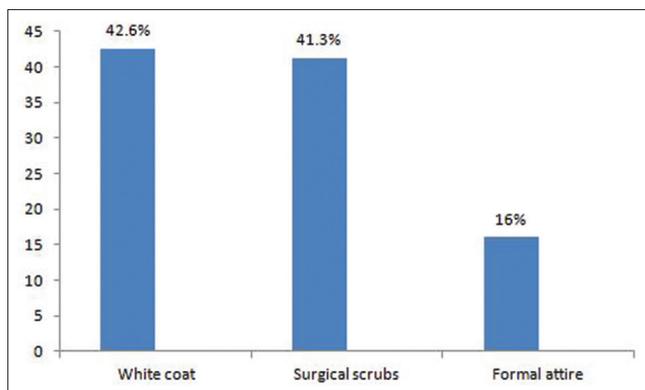


Figure 1: Preference level of children toward different attire.

450 respondents, 342 children were anxious on seeing their dentist with protective wear and only 108 children were not anxious and preferred protective wear.

DISCUSSION

The present observational study was conducted to determine the preference of children toward pediatric dentist attire and to explore the reasons for their preference toward particular attire. In the current study, 42.6% of children preferred their dentist to wear white coat. The reasons behind their preference towards white coat includes, color, symbol of healing, looks professional, increase their confidence level and interestingly, they believe and trust that doctors or dentist will wear white coat. This result is in agreement with the study done by Alsarheed *et al.*, who had stated that white coat was considered as a symbol of healing.^[4] The reasons for their dislike includes, fear of bodily injury, contamination of white coat, stains, or dirt will be easily seen. The children who preferred colored scrubs listed reasons for their preference such as, child friendly attire, bright color, attractive, looks simple and not threatening and children who did not prefer colored surgical scrubs gave explanations which includes, scrubs does not indicate them as doctors/dentist and gives an impression that they are not well-trained when compared to dentist in white coat and gives a scary feeling that they are going to operate. The suggestions of their dislike were similar to the study done by Kamavaram Ellore *et al.* The author had concluded that surgical scrubs remained as least preferred attire for the children and their parents in his study.^[5] The least preferred attire was formal attire and their reasons for their likes includes, looks very normal and casual and not scary, and their reasons for dislike states that it is not exhibiting a level of professionalism.

Most of the children had stated that they were very anxious to see their dentist with protective wear. Few children preferred their dentist to wear protective wear and explained the importance of protective wear in the prevention of transmission of infectious disease.

Yet there is a mixed response from children regarding their preference towards dentist attire, but it is very clear that, though

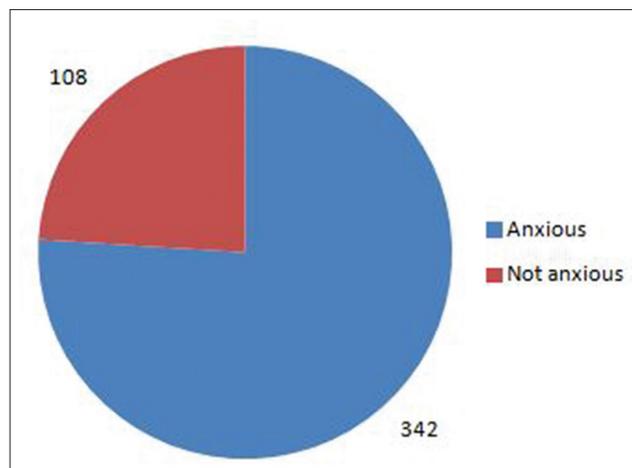


Figure 2: Anxiety toward protective wear.

in the developing country fashion plays an influential role, but our children are still the same, preferring their dentist to wear a traditional formal white coat or a colored surgical scrubs. It is worth to mention that, most of the children were able to justify their thoughts and able to understand others perspective, i.e., understands the importance of protective wear, clearly justified Jean Piaget's theory statement of increasing level of understanding and maturational level among children as their age advances.

CONCLUSION

Most of the children preferred their pediatric dentist to wear white coat or colored surgical scrubs without protective wear. This can be utilized to improve the friendly relationship between the child and pediatric dentist.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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