

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PAIN MANAGEMENT IN DENTISTRY - A QUESTIONNAIRE BASED STUDY

RJ ILANKIZHAI*

I BDS

Saveetha dental college and hospitals

Saveetha University

162, P.H. ROAD

Chennai -600077

DR.KATHIRAVAN

Department of oral and maxillofacial surgery

Saveetha dental college and hospitals

Saveetha University

162, P.H. ROAD

Chennai -600077

ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the correlation between the perceptions of the dentist and the patients regarding the methods of psychological approach to pain management in dentistry and the effectiveness of these methods in pain management in dentistry.

METHODS

A questionnaire based study was conducted in a Saveetha Dental college, Chennai. Two different groups were selected for the ease of conducting the study. One of the group consisted of dentists and final year students studying who had sufficient experience in handling patients and the other group consisted of patients of different age groups. The data collected from the two groups were compiled and analysed statistically.

RESULT

In most cases, Dentists as well as patients have the same opinion regarding most of the factors which help in reduction of dental anxiety and methods of pain management except for a few factors for which there is contradiction between the perceptions of both the groups.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research clearly signifies that most of the perceptions of the dentist and the patients regarding the psychological approach to pain management match, but there still needs to be some kind of extra effort from both the sides on certain criteria which would enable to make each dental treatment a pleasant experience for both the groups.

Keywords: Pain management, dentistry, dental anxiety, dental phobia, pain

INTRODUCTION

The sense of pain, anxiety and fear have always been an inevitable part of dentistry. It is the common human mentality that a sense of potential danger produces fear which in turn leads to the provocation of anxiety. This universal phenomenon can also be known as Dental phobia, dental anxiety or odontophobia. These experiences of anxiety and fear and their contributory effects upon pain can be thought of as a part of human existence.¹

Dental anxiety and fear are very common and troublesome not only for the dentist but is equally problematic for the patients. Fear of dental treatment and dental procedures are prevalent and have a great impact on the quality of life and well as the quality of dental treatment performed. Furthermore, dental fear still presents as a major barrier to the uptake of dental treatment. Delay in seeking treatment as a result of dental anxiety often means that conservative treatment options are not viable.²

Numerous factors are associated with dental anxiety, the most common ones being memory of prior painful dental experiences, the ambience of the dental clinic, pain expectation, and other psychological factors. All these factors have a major impact on the pain experience of the patient. Reducing dental anxiety is found to be profoundly reducing an individual's pain experience.³

Management of dental anxiety

Dental anxiety may be prevented by the avoidance of negative experiences and the promotion of positive experiences for the patients attending the dental treatment.¹ Examples of such approaches could include encouraging a warm welcoming, friendly environment, an unhurried clinical atmosphere, slow introduction, and non-traumatic explanation of the anticipated procedures.³ Factors provoking anxiety may be different for children and adults. Some of the methods such as rapport building, distraction like video

taped cartoons, audio taped stories and video games and voice control, inclusion of a parent or guardian with hand-holding, may be helpful in reducing the children's anxiety levels. In case of adults, the methods are quite different. This involves providing the patient with the following information.

- * Information about what will happen (procedural information)
- * Information about what sensations the individual will experience (sensory information)
- * Information about what the individual can do to cope with the situation (coping information).¹

These information would help the patient to mentally prepare for the treatment and aid in reducing the anxiety levels. However, there is currently little evidence to confirm or refute the effectiveness of such an approach in preventing future dental anxiety.

It is a known fact that all the patients appearing for a dental treatment will have varying degree of dental anxiety. On the basis of this we propose that it is essential to the clinical management of the patient that the dentists assess the patients level of anxiety and intervene accordingly. For this purpose, it is essential that the dentist or the clinician needs to be aware of the anxiety provoking factors from the patients perception so as to make it easy for the clinician to adopt techniques to make the patient feel relaxed and secure.

This article would aid in fulfilling this purpose as this study is mainly conducted to evaluate the correlation between the perceptions of the dentist and the patient regarding the various psychological methods of pain management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A questionnaire based study was conducted. Two different groups were selected for the ease of conducting the study. One of the group consisted of dentists and final year students studying in a private dental college in Chennai who had sufficient experience in handling patients and the other group consisted of patients of different age groups with different dental problems. A questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the information which needed to be collected and the same questionnaire was given to both the groups in order to gather the different perceptions of the two groups regarding the same criteria. A total of 60 subjects were selected and were handed over with the respective questionnaires.

The completed questionnaires were then analyzed using bar graphs and pie charts and the percentage of coincidence of perceptions of both the groups were calculated to come to a conclusion regarding the ideas of psychological approach to pain management and to incorporate the ideas in the clinic to make each dental visit a better experience.

RESULT

The information collected through the survey from both the groups were analysed statistically, and the denouement was calculated in percentage.

TABLE 1: Most frightening facts about dental Clinics – Dentist’s perception

Factors	Percentage (%)
Ambience	7
Sight of needles and instruments	60
Sounds	0
Remarks regarding my oral health	0
Previous experience or pain expectation	33

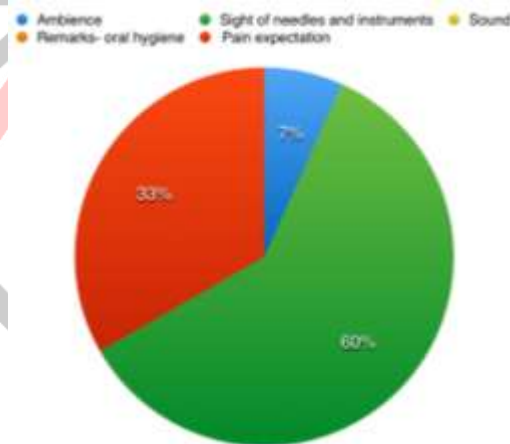
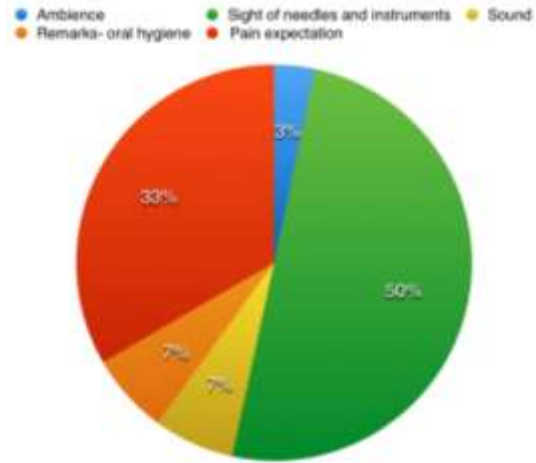


Figure 1: Most frightening facts about dental clinics – Dentist’s perception

TABLE 2: Most frightening facts about dental clinics – Patient’s perception

Factors	Percentage (%)
Ambience	3
Sight of needles and instruments	50
Sounds	7
Remarks regarding my oral health	7
Previous experience or pain expectation	33



The information collected through the survey has been compiled and represented in **figure 3** and **figure 4**.

Figure 2 : Most frightening facts about dental clinics – Patient’s perception

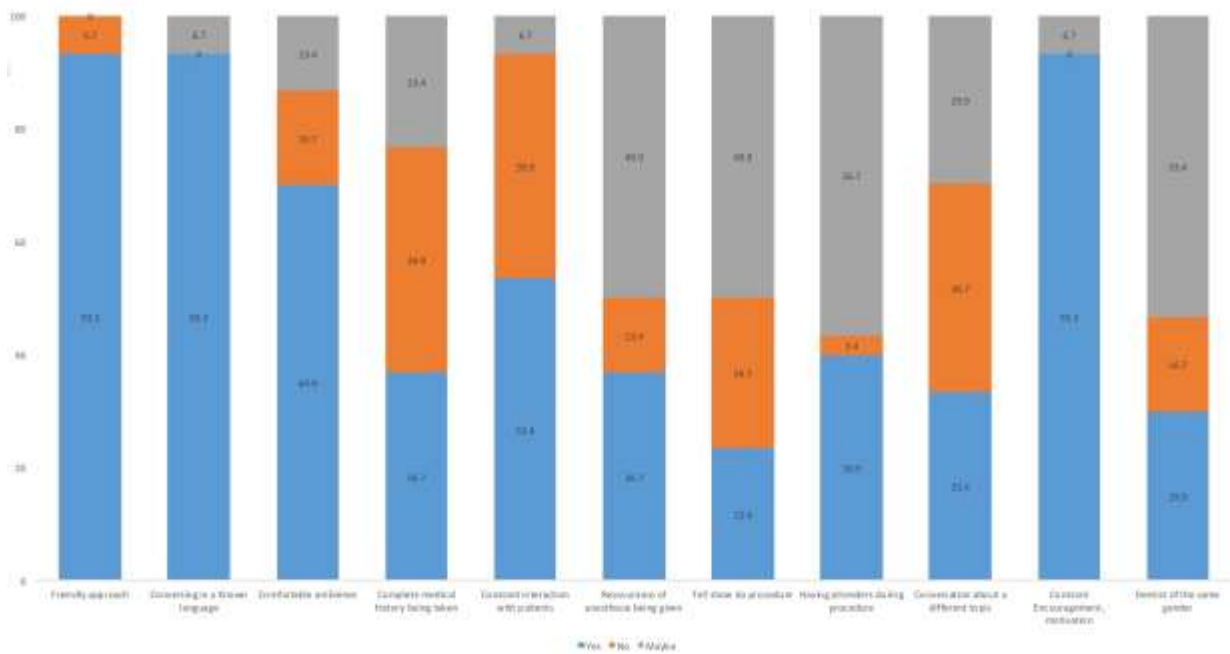


Figure 3: Factors helping in reduction of dental anxiety levels – Dentist’s perception

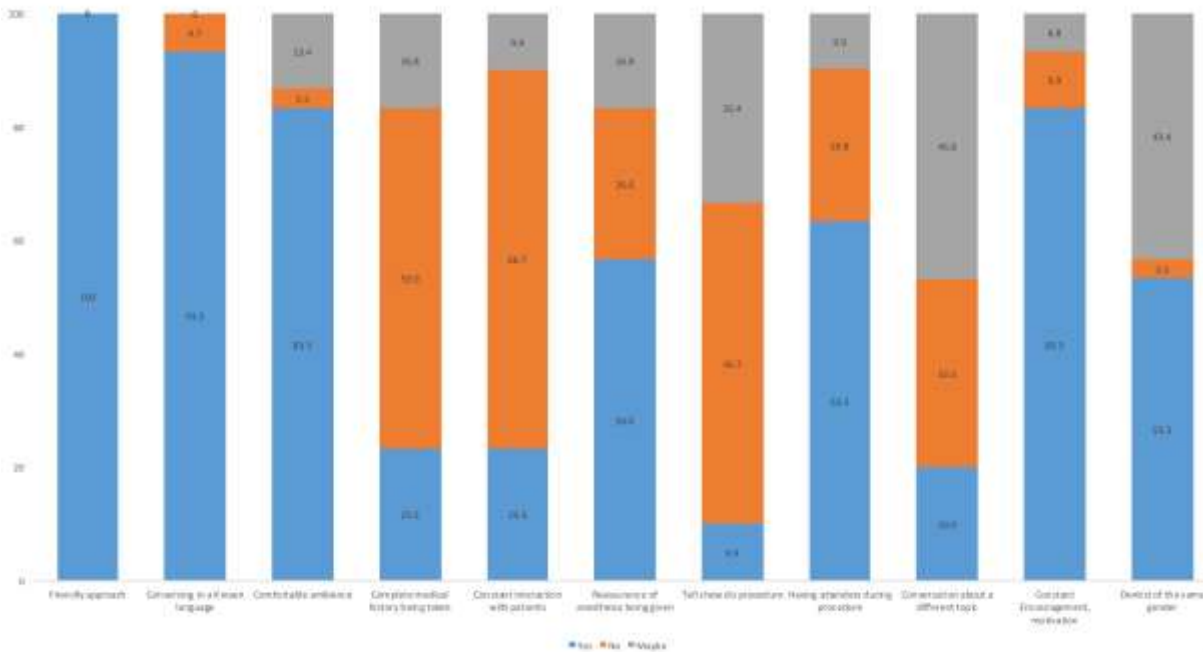


Figure 4: Factors helping in reduction of dental anxiety levels – Patient’s perception

DISCUSSION

The study comprised of 30 subjects in each group, out of which one group consisted of experienced dentists and the other group consisted of patients with various dental problems and the results were converted to percentage for the ease of calculation.

From analysing the above given graphical representation of the data collected, it is clearly evident that most of the perceptions of psychological methods of pain management of both the group matches to a certain extent.

According to the collected data, majority (60%)of the dentist believe that the most frightening fact about the dental clinics is the sight of needles and instruments. While the other 33 % believe that previous experiences and pain expectation is the most frightening fact about dental clinics. The remaining 6.6% consider the ambience or environment of the dental clinics is the most disturbing quotient about dental clinics.

The perceptions of patients are very similar to the ones of the dentists. Out of the 30 subjects who completed the survey, 50% of them consider the sight of needles and instruments as the most frightening fact about dental clinics, and 30 % believe that previous experience and pain expectation, 6.6% consider the remarks made by the dentist,6.6 % consider the sounds heard in the clinic,3.3% consider the ambience and environment of dental clinics as the most frightening factor of dental clinics.

From the data analysis, it is clearly visible that both the groups accept unanimously the fact that a friendly approach by the dentists would help the patients to remain calm and relaxed while entering the dental office. This is clearly evident from the 93.3 % of correlation of acceptance of this fact by the two groups. Majority of dentists as well as patients (93.3%) accept that conversing with the patients in a comfortable or known language would help them in developing a good rapport with the patient which in turn would reflect on the reduction of anxiety levels.

83.3% of the patients consider that the maintenance of a calm and comfortable ambience would help them to be relaxed while only 69.9 % of the dentists accept it. According to the data, majority of the patients(59.9%) are not aware of the importance of medical history hence do not consider it as a major factor determining their anxiety levels whereas dentists have mixed opinions regarding the medical history being taken as 36.7% of the dentists accepts it as a major factor whereas the other 39.9% have a different opinion.

When it comes to factors like constant interaction with the patient and conversation about a different topic both the dentist as well as the patients do not give much importance to it as only a small proportion of both the groups accept it as a factor controlling fear and anxiety.

Both the dentist and patients unanimously accept the fact that constantly encouraging, appreciating and motivating the patients would aid in eradicating the fear and anxiety from the minds of patients.

There is a clear contradiction between the two groups regarding the tell show do method, while a majority of patients 56.6% believe that it would help them keep relaxed if they know the treatment procedure, while only 36.6% of the dentist accept this as majority of them are not sure of the efficiency of the method in reducing anxiety.

53.3% of the patients believe that they would be more comfortable with the dentist of the same gender whereas the majority of the dentist 53.4% are not sure about the preference of patients.

In conclusion, both the dentists as well as patients have the same opinion regarding most of the factors which help in reduction of anxiety except for very few factors for which there is contradiction between the perceptions of both the groups.

CONCLUSION

Dental anxiety is something inevitable when it comes to any sort of dental treatment. It can never be completely mitigated, but efforts can be made to decrease the degree of anxiety and psychological approach seems to be the most appropriate method. From the conducted research it is clear that most of the perceptions of the dentist and the patients regarding the psychological approach to pain management match, but there still needs to be some kind of extra effort from both the sides on certain criteria and this would enable to make each dental treatment a pleasant experience for both the groups.

REFERENCES

- [1] S M Cohen, J Fiske & J T Newton, Behavioural dentistry: The impact of dental anxiety on daily living, British Dental Journal 189, 385 - 390 (2000)
- [2] T. Newton¹, K. Asimakopoulou¹, B. Daly¹, S. Scambler¹ & S. Scott¹, The management of dental anxiety: time for a sense of proportion?, British Dental Journal 213, 271 - 274 (2012)
- [3] Jeff Burgess, DDS, MSD, Pain Management in Dentistry, medscape

