



**ASSESSMENT OF AWARENESS ABOUT MALOCCLUSION
AMONG PATIENTS – A QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire study was done to assess the awareness of malocclusion among patients visiting a private college in Chennai. It contained eight questions that could assess the patients knowledge about malocclusion, problems associated with it and initiative taken to visit an orthodontists to get it treated. It was distributed to 300 patients (n=300). After computing the data, it was observed that in spite of having the basic understanding about malocclusion people refrained from visiting an orthodontist to get it treated. Therefore it is necessary to carry out programs that would help the population to understand malocclusion and its complications better and take initiative to visit an orthodontist to get the problem treated.

KEY WORDS: Awareness of malocclusion, Malocclusion, knowledge of malocclusion, orthodontic treatment.



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INTRODUCTION

Malocclusion is a very common problem in our country. It is present in a majority of adolescents and adults ^[1]. It may be congenital or habitual. Recent studies have emphasized the use of dermatoglyphics for identifying the cause of malocclusion. ^[2]A variety of social, cultural, psychological and personal factors influence the perception of dental appearance ^[3, 4, 5, and 6]. At a social level individuals with malocclusion may have a low self-esteem, reserved personality and might feel inferior to their counterparts. Prevalence of malocclusion in Indian population varies from 20%- 43% with higher prevalence between the age group of 6-30 yrs. ^[7, 8, 9] Since the population increases so as the prevalence of malocclusion increases proportionally. Very few studies have been conducted in India to assess the knowledge a patient persist about malocclusion and their orthodontic treatment needs. Hence the present study was designed. A pilot study was carried out in Saveetha Dental Hospital, Chennai for assessment of awareness of malocclusion among patients visiting the hospital. No age limit was kept as malocclusion exist at every age. A questionnaire that consisted of 8 questions was prepared in the regional language i.e. Tamil and the same was also prepared in English. According to the convenience of the language the patient was given the Tamil or the English questionnaire. The question was framed in such a way that the knowledge of patients about their occlusion and the associated problems could be assessed. A total sample size of 300 patients were involved in the study and a duration of 1 month was taken to complete the study.

AIM

The aim of the study is to assess patient's knowledge regarding their malocclusion and to pave a new way as to how self-awareness about malocclusion and their ill effects can be established among the general population.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the knowledge among patients visiting saveetha dental hospital about their dental appearance
- To assess the importance given to dental appearance and occlusion by general population
- To assess the knowledge and ability to identify malocclusion in self and in others.
- To assess the knowledge among patients regarding the ill effects associated with malocclusion.
- To improve the knowledge and spread awareness among the general population regarding malocclusion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A structured questionnaire of eight questions was framed in local language as well as in English. Questions were framed to assess the patient's knowledge regarding malaligned teeth in self or in others, occurrence of decay and gum diseases due to malocclusion, willingness for correction and steps taken to correct it. The questionnaire was first pre-tested where 10 patients were initially given the questions prepared by self and the difficulty in understanding the questions were noted and modified accordingly. Then the questionnaire was distributed among the general population with no age limit in Saveetha dental hospital, Chennai. A total of 300 patients (n=300) answered the questions. Patients mostly ranged between the age group of 15-25 yrs. with a high prevalence of females than males. Data was analyzed and descriptive statistics were computed using SPSS Version 17 (Table 1).

RESULTS

A total of 300 people were interviewed. Significantly high proportion of (68.3%) were aware that they had malaligned teeth (Table 1). Around sixty percent of the study participants knew that maligned teeth can lead to decay and

gum diseases. Majority (87.3%) knew that malalignment can be corrected (Figure 1). However, only 39.3% had ever visited a dentist for the complaint (Figure 2). This proportion was also found to be statistically significant. A significantly small proportion of people (38%) said that someone had commented that they had malaligned teeth. Almost sixty seven percent had noticed that others had malaligned teeth.

DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was conducted to assess the awareness among patients about malocclusion, associated problems and the initiative taken towards the treatment. The survey revealed interesting findings reflecting the attitude of patients towards their occlusion, problems associated with it and its treatment. Mostly patients between the age group of 15-25 yrs of age participated in the study with 65% being females and 35% being males. Similar study was conducted by Arcis et al in Spain with the help of Dental Esthetic Index ^[10]. It revealed greater demand for the treatment in women (23.9%) than in men (14.4%). It would be helpful if studies for the younger age group is carried out to let the younger population understand about malocclusion. This study revealed that a high proportion of patients who participated in the survey had the basic

knowledge to identify malocclusion in self and in others and knew that it could lead to decay and gum problems. They also knew that it could be corrected but a small proportion only had visited a dentist regarding this complaint. Therefore it is necessary to motivate patients to go to an orthodontist for treatment of malocclusion and not just ignore the oral condition. Another accidental finding is that almost all the patients who participated in this study belonged to the literate group as they were able to read and answer the questionnaire on their own. This shows us that similar studies should be conducted among the illiterate population and educate them about malocclusion and need for its treatment.

CONCLUSION

From the above study conducted, it was observed that most of the patients were aware about identifying malocclusion in self and in others and were knowledgeable about the problems associated with it such as decay and gum diseases. Patients inspite of being knowledgeable that malocclusion can be corrected, did not show interest in its treatment. Conducting programs to motivate people to take initiative for going to an orthodontist and getting the necessary treatment done to avoid further complications can be useful in improving the dental health of the population.

Table 1

Awareness and Practices regarding malaligned teeth among study participants (n=300)

S.NO	QUESTIONS	YES	NO	Z statistic	P value
1.	Have you ever noticed that you have malaligned teeth?	205 (68.3)	95 (31.7)	6.34	<0.0001
2.	Have people commented on your teeth alignment?	114 (38)	186 (62)	-4.1569	<0.0001
3.	Have you ever noticed others with malaligned teeth?	200 (66.7)	100 (33.3)	5.7850	<0.0001
4.	Are you confident to show your teeth while talking or smiling?	191 (63.7)	109 (36.3)	4.7458	<0.0001
5.	Are you aware that malaligned teeth can lead to decay?	183 (61)	117 (39)	3.8105	0.0001
6.	Are you aware that malaligned teeth can lead to gum diseases?	176 (58.7)	124 (41.3)	3.0138	0.0026
7.	Do you know that malalignment of teeth can be corrected?	262 (87.3)	38 (12.7)	12.9211	<0.0001
8.	Have you ever visited a dentist regarding this complaint?	118 (39.3)	182 (60.7)	-3.7066	0.0002

Figure 1
Awareness about malaligned teeth among study participants (n=300)

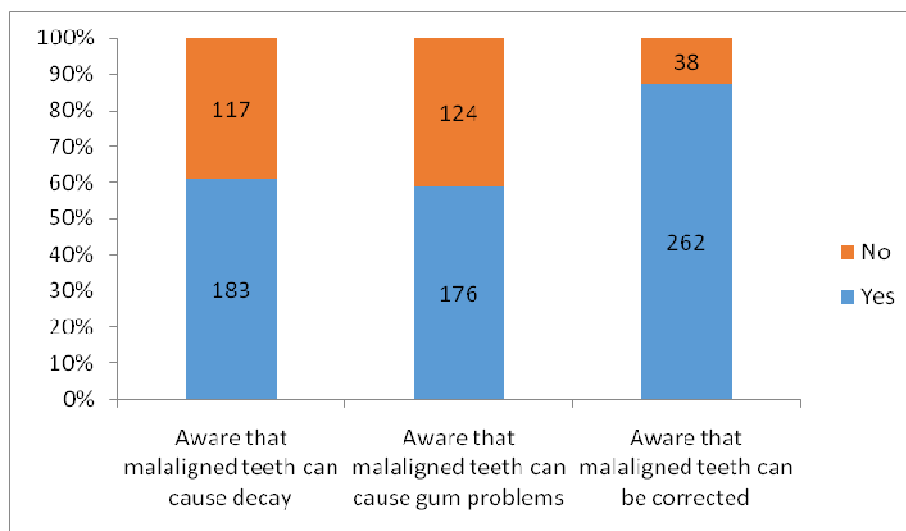
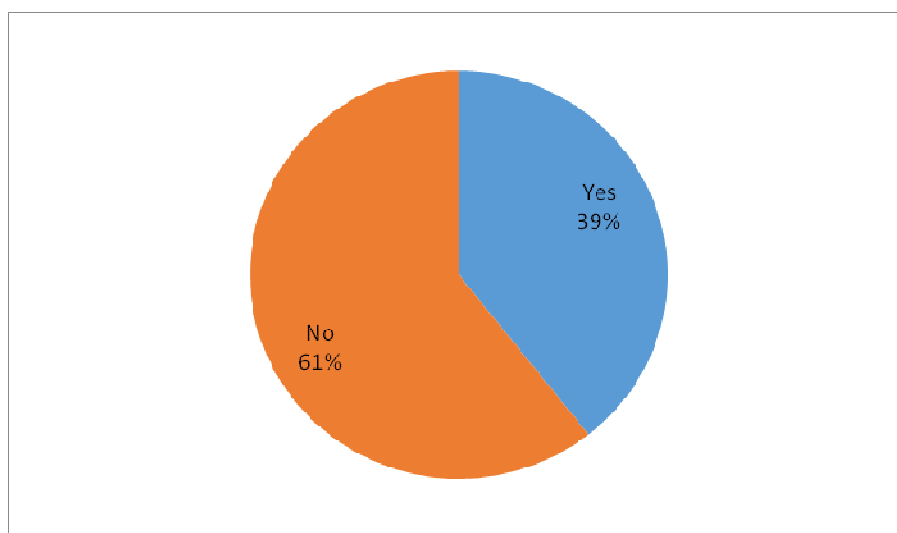


Figure 2
Consultation of dentist for malalignment problems (n=300)



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