

## Patient's Perception about Dental Professionals Attire

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To find out which of the dentist's attire is most preferred and which one is least by the patients (ii) to find out patient's perception about his/her dentist's competence in relation to his attire and (iii) to find out which attire of the dentist causes more anxiety in patients.

**Study Design:** Descriptive cross-sectional study

**Place and Duration of Study:** Department of Oral Pathology, Institute of Dentistry, CMH Lahore Medical College Lahore and Military Dental Centre, Lahore from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

**Methodology:** Three hundred and nineteen participants were included. Patients between 15 to 60 years of age and either gender were included. Participants who gave a vague opinion that attire even matters were excluded.

**Results:** There were 169 males and 150 were females and 141 participants were employed, 106 were unemployed and 72 were students. The most preferred attire was scrubs selected by 43% of the participants. The least preferred attire t-shirt and shorts selected by 64.2%. According to patient's perception the dentist who wears white lab coat were more competent rather than those wearing T shirts and shorts.

**Conclusion:** Patients perception about a dentist's competence is affected by his/her attire.

**Keywords:** Perception, Dental professional, Attire

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### INTRODUCTION

The judgment of character depends on the way people dress. Thus, while Cinderella appears in a sparkling white gown, the wicked stepmother flaunts in purple and black; similarly, we expect doctors to wear a white overall.<sup>1</sup> Professionalism and dental clinical attire are important in doctor-patient relationship.<sup>2</sup> A psychologist has already assumed that patient's links outfit of a doctor to his or her competence.<sup>3</sup> The connection between patient and doctor depends on the first impression of the dentist.<sup>4,5</sup> Many articles have described the preference of white coat by patients.<sup>6-8</sup> Many Psychologists have stated; first impression is the last impression.<sup>9</sup> The doctor-patient relationship is moving towards customer based service.<sup>10</sup>

Research held in Istanbul, Turkey on 827 children (9-14 years old). 45.6% of these children chose the formal dress with a white coat while 30.5% opting for informal clothing.<sup>11</sup>

School dental science, health promotion board, Singapore surveyed 402 parents-children pairs using an interviewer managed questionnaire. The parents opted formal attire while children chose an informal dress.<sup>12</sup>

Research made by McKenna showed that patients preferred dentists with white coats. With 188 questionnaires delivered, 62% preferred formal dental attire with a white lab coat.<sup>10</sup>

Rehman and his colleagues researched on the relation between dental clinician attire and patients trust. Out of 400 participants, 76.3% participants preferred a shirt and tie with white lab coat followed by scrubs (10.2%).<sup>6</sup>

Another research conducted at the University Of Minnesota School Of Dentistry on 200 participants, with 56% choosing formal clothing with a lab coat. Also, dental attire effects anxiety of patient.<sup>2</sup>

Matsui conducted his research on 101 children and their parents in an outpatient setting of a pediatric referral

center. (69% of children and 66% of parents) selected White coat attire. Participants rated shorts negatively.<sup>13</sup>

Research conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia about the patient's preference for dental attire among private and government clinics and dental schools. 60% of patients opted female dentist to wear a white coat and 2/3rd preferred male dentist to wear a formal dress with a white coat.<sup>14</sup>

The Department of Pediatric and Preventive Dentistry Navodaya Dental College and Hospital, Raichur, Andhra Pradesh, India conducted a research on 150 children and 150 parents to assess their opinion of dental attire. 70% of children and 42% of parents preferred traditional white coat attire.<sup>15</sup>

### PATIENTS AND METHODS

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at Department of Oral Pathology, Institute of Dentistry, CMH Lahore Medical College Lahore and Military Dental Centre, Lahore from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. A total of 319 peoples were included and asked to solve the questionnaire after taking verbal consent. Patients between 15 to 60 years of age and previously visited a dentist for treatment were included. Dentists and para medical staff and patients who gave a vague opinion that attire even matters were excluded. Data collection form consisted of three main headings with set of relevant pictures of the selected attires and series of further questions related to these pictures were asked. Data was entered and analyzed by SPSS-23.

### RESULTS

There were 169 (52.9%) males and 150 (47.1%) females with mean age was 35.14±15.47 years (Table 1). The most preferred attires scrubs 138 (43.2%) followed by formal dress with white lab coat 112 (35.1%) and disposable gown

39 (12.2%). There appear to be preference of men for scrubs as compared with females (50.9% vs. 34.2%, P=0.003) and difference was significant. The least preferred attire was t-shirt and shorts 205 (64.2%). There were no gender differences. Competence was related to formal dress with white lab coat 146 (45.7%) followed by scrubs 82 (25.7%). Males more frequently related scrubs to competence compared to females (31.5% vs. 19.5%, P=0.014), while females more frequently related disposable gown to competence (22.7% vs. 13.0%, P=0.024). Anxiety and fear were most frequently associated with t-shirt and shorts 138 (43.2%). There were no gender differences. Shalwar qamiz was acceptable as a dress 122 (38.2%) whereas 200 (62.8%) rejected it. There were no gender differences. 254 (79.6%) people wanted their dentists to wear identity card. Significantly more females wanted their dentists to wear identity card (87.8% vs. 79.1%, P=0.046) [Table 2).

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants (n=319)

Variable	No.	%
Age (years)	35.14±15.47	
Gender		
Male	169	52.9
Female	150	47.1
Occupation		
Employed	141	44.2
Unemployed	106	33.2
Students	72	22.6

Table 2: Percentage of preference of attire

Attire	Preferred	Least preferred	Competence	Anxiety and fear
Scrubs	43.2%	3.7%	25.7%	7%
T-shirt and jeans	6.9%	3.1%	4.1%	1.9%
Shalwar qamiz	38.2%	62.8%	3.1%	13.3%
Formal dress with white lab coat	35.1%	5.0%	45.75	8.2%
Disposable gown	12.2%	6.5%	18.1%	25.9%
T-shirt and shorts	0.3%	64.2%	3.45	43.2%

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to measure patient's opinion about dental professional attire and to know what patient feels with various dental attires. We measured opinion of 319 participants in a cross sectional survey over a period of 8 weeks. The questionnaires returned a response rate of 100%. The demographics

The results strongly emphasized on the importance of dental attire for dentists. Majority of patients (n=138, 43%) strongly preferred scrubs. A review of literature<sup>10-15</sup> strongly emphasized formal dress with white coat as the most common choice of patients in every single study but here in my study scrubs are most preferred. Recently it has been seen that there is a shift from traditional white coat attire to scrubs and participants felt that scrubs portray more professionalism and cleanliness. Likewise, in Pakistan

dentists are using scrubs more often so it has led to this change. 63.7% participants rejected T-shirt and shorts as dental attire similarly research that occurred in Istanbul, Turkey showed the same results.<sup>11</sup>

People love to wear the national dress of Pakistan but 62.1% of participants rejected it as professional dental attire. Participants found it unprofessional to wear this during work. Since no researches have been done on this topic in Pakistan, so we need to cover more clinical setups and continue our research.

## CONCLUSION

Patients perception about a dentist's competence is affected by his/her attire, scrubs followed by formal attire/white lab coat were most preferred attires and T-shirt & shorts makes the participants more anxious.

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