

ORIGINAL RESEARCH**Gender stereotypes for choosing orthodontist: a cross sectional survey study****¹Dr. Alisha Babbar, ²Dr. Amit Babbar**¹Senior lecturer, Department of Orthodontics, Adesh Dental College, Buchu kalan, Punjab, India²Reader, Department of Prosthodontics, Adesh dental college, Buchu kalan, Punjab, India**Corresponding author**

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Received: 22 December, 2022

Accepted: 26 January, 2023

Abstract

Introduction: An investment in knowledge paves the best interest. As awareness forms the basis of planning, therefore it is obligatory to know the patient preference for gender of orthodontist during this period. Several studies have shown that the gender is important for patients when they choose their orthodontist. These findings are part of a series of daily polls focused on patients attitude towards different characteristics of dentists and dental practices.

Aims and objectives: This study was done to assess the patient preference for gender of orthodontist regarding their treatment.

Methods: A cross-sectional questionnaire based study was done among 200 orthodontic patients who visited the practice for the treatment of their crooked teeth. Twenty objective questions were framed and patients were asked to fill the same. Obtained data were tabulated and was amended to descriptive statistical analysis.

Results: As per our study the participants prefer male orthodontist for their orthodontic treatment as compared to female orthodontist (39.5%) Male orthodontist were characterized as decisive and confident (65.5%) about choice of treatment, less emotional and maintain expertise (58.5%), performs less painful procedures (71%) as compared to Female orthodontist whereas female orthodontist found to have more friendly attitude (49%) towards patients and looks better in white coat (47.5%) as compared to male orthodontist.

Conclusion: The present study adds to the body of knowledge about orthodontist gender preferences.

Key words: Orthodontic treatment, Preference, Influence, Gender.

Introduction

Patients may consider various aspects when selecting an orthodontist, including referrals from other dental professionals¹. The first meeting between an orthodontist and a patient is crucial to the development of a professional connection during dental treatment. The appearance of a dental professional is important for making a positive impression and fostering a better and more successful relationship².

The structure of the dental profession provides unique opportunities for both women and men to exercise a high degree of autonomy and flexibility and at the same time, enjoy the status awards associated with being a healthcare provider. Women's participation in dentistry and

dental specializations, has risen considerably in recent years³. The number of women entering the orthodontic profession over the past few decades has increased dramatically⁴. Over the past few years, several studies have emphasized on education and attempted to identify trends and evaluate new developments in orthodontic education.⁵

The nature of the required clinical care, physician attitude and communication style, patients stereotyping of physicians, patients prior contact with same gender physicians, the quality of patients past experience with Male and Female physicians, and patients' age are all possible explanations for the patients' preference for orthodontists. It is also shaped by culturally particular beliefs, conventions, and experiences with desired health-care utilization.⁶⁻⁷⁻⁸.

Several demographic and practice pattern differentiate between male and female orthodontist. Both Male and Female orthodontist are dealing with patients in different personality, mode, behaviour, knowledge and attitudes which will have affect on patient-dentist relationship.⁹

Few studies have explored the application of traditional gender norms to dentists or whether preferences for either a male or female dentist relate to such perceptions. Hence the study was conducted with an objective to evaluate patients' perception about various factors associated with dental care from the orthodontist gender perspective.

Materials and methods

A cross sectional questionnaire-based study was performed on 200 samples comprising of potential orthodontic patients visiting the practice for treatment of crooked teeth. In formed written consent was obtained from the participants after explaining the purpose of the research. The research has been conducted in full accordance with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki.

A preformed questionnaire containing the details related to demographics and 20 questions related to attitude and preference of gender of the treating orthodontist was developed after thorough literature survey. All the questions had 3 options (Male orthodontist, Female orthodontist, No difference).The subjects chosen were comprised of different strata of socioeconomic background which favored the heterogeniety in our sample.

The data was collected on a structured performa containing details of demographics and 20 questions(**Table 1**).The questionnaire was handed over to the patients and were requested to fill it. It was collected after 10 min and checked for its completeness. The data collected was then statistically analyzed.

Table 1: Questionnaire

Q.1. Does the Gender of the orthodontist matter when you opt for orthodontic treatment?	a) Yes b) No
Q.2. Who do you prefer as an orthodontist?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.3. According to you who is capable of understanding your pain better	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.4. Who according to you is more efficient in work ethics?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.5. Whose attitude would be more friendly towards you?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.6. Who according to you will perform a less painful procedure?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.7. Who according to you will understand your chief complain better?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.8. Who according to you is a better orthodontist?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.9. Would you suggest treatment from a	a) Male orthodontist b) Female

female orthodontist to your family and friends?	orthodontist c) No difference
Q.10. Are you willing to pay increased treatment charges to ?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.11. Who according to you look better in white coat as an orthodontist?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.12. If you get the option of getting your child orthodontic treatment done whom would you choose ?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.13. According to you who has a better lifestyle ?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.14. Who is more confident towards his/her work ?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.15. Whom you consider is less emotional and maintains expertise ?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.16. Whom you consider is more comfortable about answering questions related to general health?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.17. Whom do u consider has better management skills?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.18. Whom will you choose for multiple visits for your orthodontic treatment?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.19. Whom you think spends more time in suggesting preventive measures?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference
Q.20. Whom do u think is less influenced by opinions of others?	a) Male orthodontist b) Female orthodontist c) No difference

Results

A total of 200 patients participated (respond rate 100%) in the study. The data collected was transferred to Microsoft Excel and then the results were analyzed by using SPSS version 18 (IBM Corporation, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Descriptive statistics was performed to summarize numeric and qualitative data.

The result shows 61% of the participants preferred Male orthodontist for technical skills of the dentist. For orthodontic related factors 52% of the participants preferred male orthodontist for their orthodontic treatment as compared to female orthodontist (39.5%) (Table 2).

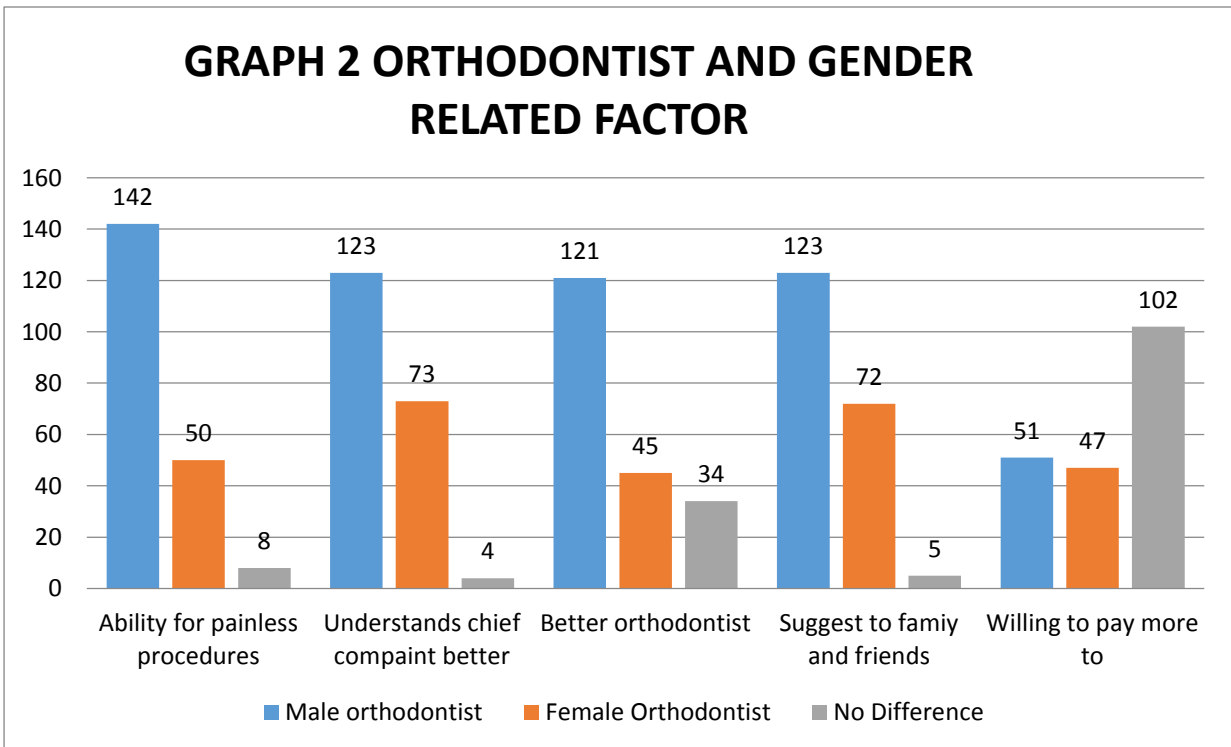
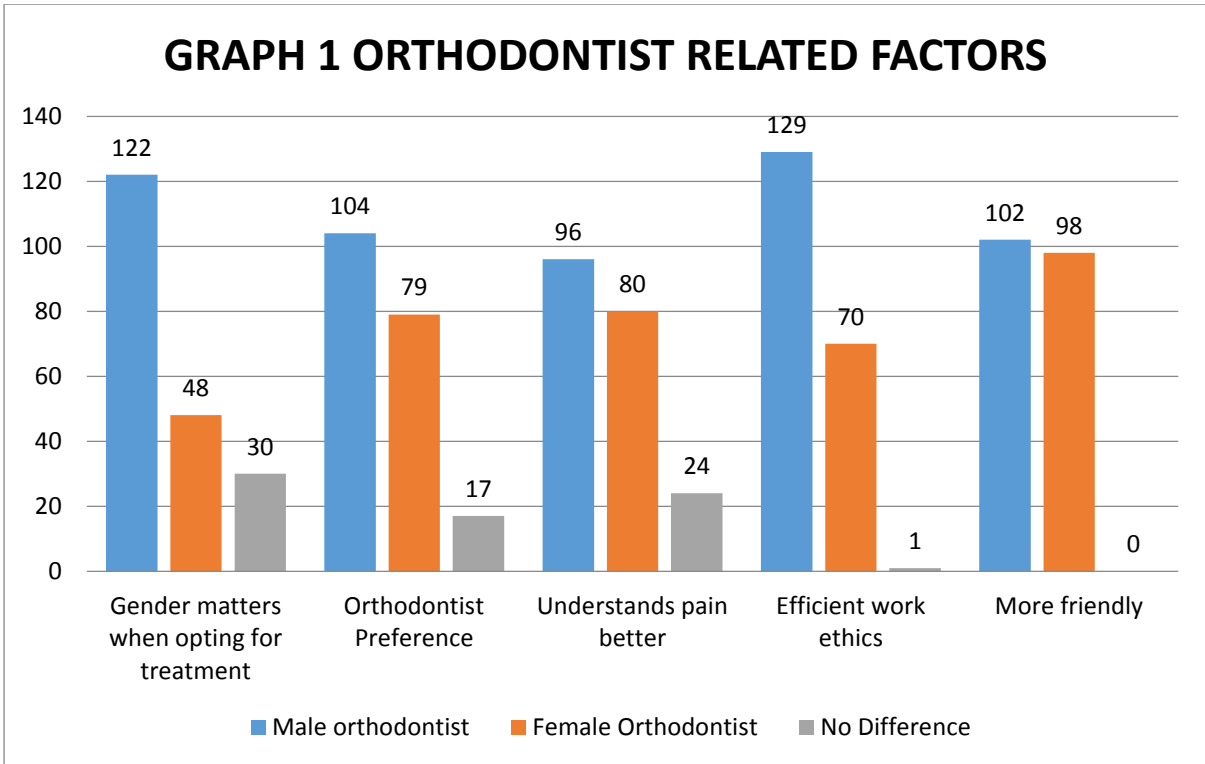
Table 2: Orthodontist and patient related factors as perceived by participants

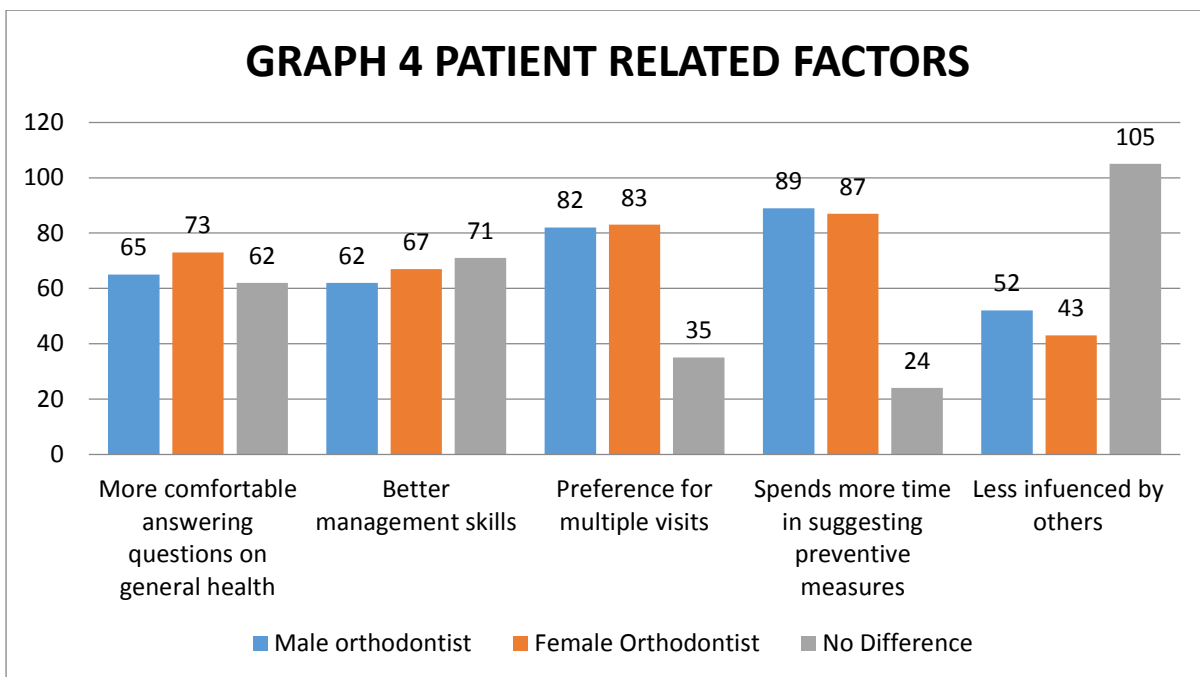
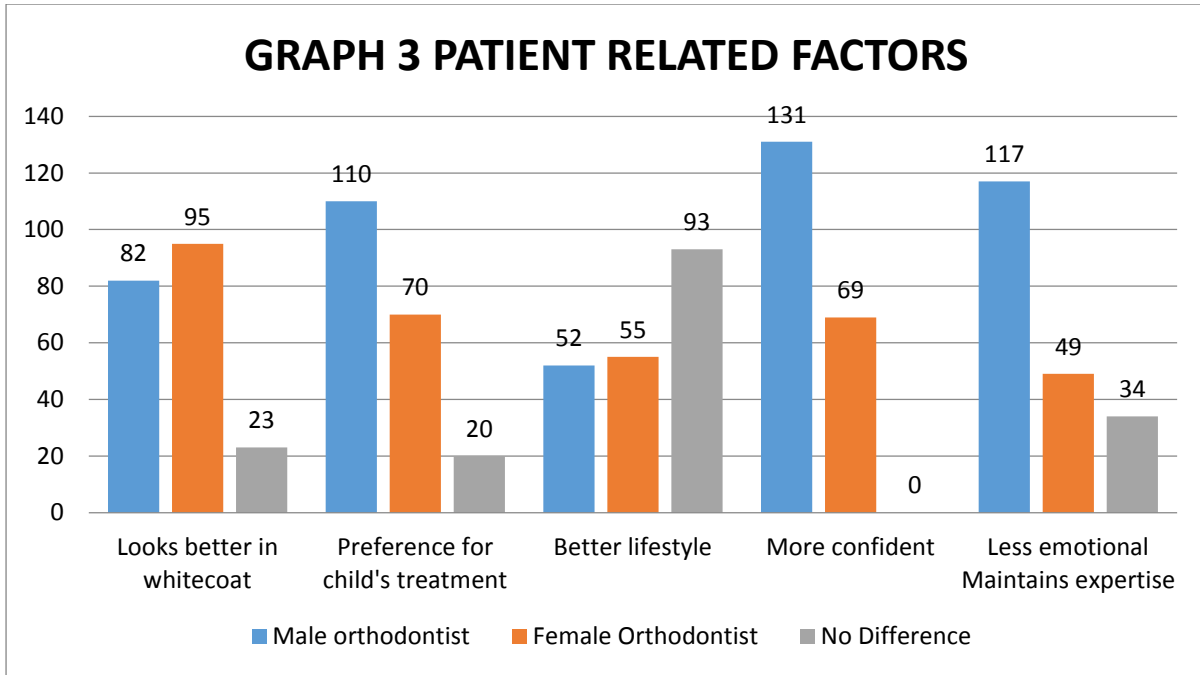
	Male orthodontist	Female orthodontist	No difference
Does the gender of the orthodontist matter when you opt for dental treatment?	122 (61%)	48 (24%)	30 (15%)
Who do you prefer as an orthodontist?	104 (52%)	79 (39.5%)	17 (8.5%)
According to you, who is capable of understanding your pain better?	96 (48%)	80 (40%)	24 (12%)
Who according to you is more efficient in work ethics?	129 (64.5%)	70 (35%)	1 (0.5%)
Whose attitude would be more friendly towards you?	102 (51%)	98 (49%)	0 (0%)
Who according to you will perform	142 (71%)	50 (25%)	8 (4%)

a less painful procedure?			
Who according to you will understand your chief complaint better?	123 (61.5%)	73 (36.5%)	4 (2%)
Who according to you is a better orthodontist?	121 (60.5%)	45 (22.5%)	34 (17%)
Would you suggest treatment from a female orthodontist to your family and friends?	123 (61.5%)	72 (36%)	5 (2.5%)
Are you willing to pay increased treatment charges to....?	51 (25.5%)	47 (23.5%)	102 (51%)
Who according to you looks better in white coat as orthodontist?	82 (41%)	95 (47.5%)	23 (11.5%)
If you get the option of your child's orthodontic treatment done whom would you choose?	110 (55%)	70 (35%)	20 (10%)
According to you who has a better lifestyle?	52 (26%)	55 (27.5%)	93 (46.5%)
Who is more confident towards his/her work?	131 (65.5%)	69 (34.5%)	0 (0%)
Whom you consider is less emotional and maintains expertise?	117 (58.5%)	49 (24.5%)	34 (17%)
Whom you consider is more comfortable about answering questions related to general health?	65 (32.5%)	73 (36.5%)	62 (31%)
Whom do you consider has better management skills?	62 (31%)	67 (33.5%)	71 (35.5%)
Whom will you choose for multiple visits for your orthodontic treatment?	82 (41%)	83 (41.5%)	35 (17.5%)
Whom you think spends more time in suggesting preventive measures?	89 (44.5%)	87 (43.5%)	24 (12%)
Whom you think is less influenced by opinions of others?	52 (26%)	43 (21.5%)	105 (52.5%)

Patients perception towards gender stereotype varied for certain characteristics in our study. Male orthodontist were characterized as decisive and confident(65.5%) about choice of treatment, less emotional and maintain expertise (58.5%),performs less painful procedures(71%) as compared to Female orthodontist(**Graph2**) whereas female orthodontist found to have more friendly attitude (49%) towards patients and looks better in white coat (47.5%) as compared to male orthodontist.

The other characteristics like paying more treatment charges, better lifestyle and management skills showed no difference for male and female orthodontist (**Table 2**).





Discussion

A positive interpersonal relationship between patient and orthodontist, as defined by mutual respect, openness, and a balance in their respective decision-making roles, is a key indicator of treatment quality. The impact of changing gender norms on patient impressions is especially important in India, where women make up a growing percentage of dentists in training. Patients tendency for expressing a preference for orthodontist of a specific gender suggests that more research is needed into the scope of patients gender preconceptions, what factors they contain, and whether a patient prefers a Male or Female orthodontist. Awareness of patient’s gender biases can give orthodontist insight into how their own demeanor could either fulfill or counter expectations that can affect patient satisfaction. Thus Gender stereotypes in dental care from orthodontic perspectives were analyzed in this study.

According to the findings of this study, the majority of patients expressed preference for male orthodontist. Male orthodontists were chosen by participants in this study because of their compassionate attitude, confidence about choice of treatment, less emotional, maintain expertise and performs less painful procedures. It can be due to Males have a take charge attitude, which may be misinterpreted as having more confidence than females. Female dentists might have a tendency to pause more during the treatment phase, and this could be mistaken for being less confident. These results were in concordance with the study by Ibrahim and Awooda 2015 which also found males to be more confident.

In the present study Male orthodontists were preferred for professional or expertise characteristics. This can be due to they are "more devoted to their jobs versus family," patients could feel that they will receive better care from clinicians who are more focused on their work, and perhaps are less likely to be distracted by family demands and more likely to stay current with the latest advancements. These results are in concordance with the study by Manjunath Puranik et al 2021.

In this study female dentists were preferred by participants for their friendly attitude as they are more comfortable in sharing dental fears, doubts, explaining about general health and overall well-being. This is because they listen, understand problems and have sensitive and caring attitude. These results are in line with studies done in literature.

For the many other traits in the study overall participants took neutral stand. The reasons for outweighing those traits and taking neutral stand may be multiple.

There are some drawbacks to this study. Before entering the dental office, any orthodontic patient develops a specific attitude toward orthodontic treatment and the personality of the orthodontist. His or her sentiments and desire for treatment are also influenced by previous orthodontic experiences. All of these factors could influence their orthodontist gender preference.

The generalization of this study is limited by a number of issues. However, more research into other elements is needed to gain a better knowledge of patient preferences, as they play a significant role in the orthodontist-patient interaction. Patients preconceived beliefs about their orthodontist can be used to help orthodontic students to better relate to their patients. The findings of this study are significant for increasing orthodontist-patient communication.

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Conclusion

The present study adds to the body of knowledge about orthodontist gender preferences. Orthodontist can better anticipate expectations that influence the orthodontist -patient relationship. Curricula that prepare dentists to build a strong rapport with patients should take into account gender preferences and stereotypes. More research is warranted to establish the validity of these findings in order to optimally prepare dentists to address patients' gender driven mindsets as well as gender stereotypes, and gender preferences.

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