

# AN EVALUATION OF PARENTAL WISH FOR PRESENCE/ ABSENCE DURING CHILD DENTAL TREATMENT: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To evaluate Parental wishes for Presence/Absence of child's dental treatment visiting Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Khyber College of Dentistry Peshawar.

**Materials and Methods:** A total number of 150 child patients who were accompanied by their parents were included in this cross sectional study visiting Department of Pediatric Dentistry, Khyber College of Dentistry Peshawar. These children were equally distributed into 75 each male and female patients. Age range of these patients was between 3-17 years. All patients accompanied with parents who wished to be part of study were included, and handicapped children and children with systemic disease were excluded from this study.

**Results:** Parents of younger children were more willing to accompany during dental treatment as compare to older children, and parents of female children were more willing to accompany their children as compare to boys.

**Conclusion:** Parental presence plays important role during children dental treatment as they feel secure and their anxiety is reduced, but sometimes parents may communicate their anxiety to children and may interfere between child and dentist relationship.

**Key Words:** Parental Presence/Absence, child dental treatment, anxiety

## Introduction

Parents Presence/Absence plays a key role in their children's dental care and their behavior during dental visits. Most of the parents wish to remain with their children during their dental treatment and this is because most of the children ask their parents to come with them during their dental visits.<sup>1</sup> Parents have an important role in children's pain management, since they know more than anybody else about their child's past history of pain experiences, interests and fears.<sup>2</sup> There are different views among dentists about the advantages and disadvantages of the parental presence/absence during their children's visits to the dentist.<sup>3,4</sup>

Several studies have explored the result of parental accompaniment on a child's behavior during dental treatment but have produced contradictory results: it would appear that the presence of a parent may perhaps improve or deteriorate a child patient's compliance to treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Reasons in support of parental presence during a child's dental treatment; include elimination of separation anxiety, minimizing use of pre-medications, increasing child cooperation, enhancing parental satisfaction in feeling so as they are able to play a positive role and satisfaction with the

care given and parents' perceived sense of duty to be present during treatment. The aims of our study were to evaluate the wish of the parents for being present or absent during their child's dental treatment.

## Materials and Methods

This study was carried out in Department of Pediatric Dentistry Khyber College of Dentistry Peshawar. Parents who accompanied their children for treatment at pediatric dentistry department were approached in the waiting area and invited to participate in the study before any dental procedure was started. Data was collected for one month during which 450 patients visited department of pediatric dentistry, however, after applying inclusion/ exclusion criteria only 150 participants consented for the study. Children who were handicapped and with some systemic diseases were excluded from this study.

A questionnaire was designed which included child's characteristics including age, sex and number of dental visits. Parent's characteristics included their wish to be present in dental surgery during dental treatment, gender, age and their education status. The subjects of this cross-sectional study were 150 children who were accompanied by their parents for dental treatment, with equal distribution of male and female children with age range from 3-17 years.

## Results

The distribution of parent's presence according to the age of the child is shown in table 1 for male child and table 2 for

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female child. Parents' opinions about leaving the practicing room were different, depending on the age of their child. The younger the children were, the more likely parents were to desire to accompany their child and that parents of girls were more likely to want to accompany their child than parents of boys. Parents of the girls were more willing to accompany them as the age of girls increases shown in table 2 as compare

to boys shown in table 1. Educated parent's wishing to be present with the child during dental treatment as compare to illiterate parents shown in table 4. Younger children prefer their parents to be present during treatment irrespective of number of visits as shown in table 5, but as the age of the child increases their preference for parent's presence varies due to their increase in confidence on dental treatment.

**Table 1: The Distribution of the Parents' wish to be Present/Absent according to the Age of the Male Child**

Childs Age (years) Male	Number	Present during Dental Treatment	Absent during Dental Treatment
3-5	10	10 (100%)	
6-8	29	25 (86.2%)	4 (13.79%)
9-11	13	7 (53.84%)	6 (46.15%)
12-14	18	8 (44.44%)	10 (55.55%)
15-17	5	1 (20%)	4 (80%)

**Table 2: The Distribution of the Parents' wish to be Present/Absent according to the Age of the Female Child**

Childs Age (years) Female	Number	Present during Dental Treatment	Absent during Dental Treatment
3-5	12	12 (100)	
6-8	23	18 (78.26%)	5 (21.73%)
9-11	17	12 (70.58%)	5 (29.41%)
12-14	18	13 (72.22%)	5 (27.77%)
15-17	5	4 (80%)	1 (20%)

**Table 3: Age of the Parents Present during Child Dental treatment**

Parents Age(years)	Yes	No
20-30	16(10.66%)	0
30-45	83(55.33%)	34(22.66%)
45- above	11(7.33%)	6(4%)

**Table 4: Presence of Parents according to their Education Status**

Education Status	Yes	No
Illiterate	49(32.66%)	17(11.33%)
Upto Higher Secondary	41(27.33%)	19(12.66%)
Graduate	20(13.33%)	4(2.66%)

**Table 5: Parents Presence in the Dental Surgery during treatment according to Number of Dental Visits**

Age	1 <sup>st</sup>		2 <sup>nd</sup>		3 <sup>rd</sup>		More than three	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3-5	10 (6.66%)	0	12 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
6-8	29 (19.33%)	1 (0.66%)	8 (5.33%)	5(3.33%)	5(3.33%)	3 (2%)	1(0.66%)	0(0%)
9- 11	7 (4.66%)	3 (2%)	8 (5.33%)	6 (4%)	4(2.66%)	1(0.66%)	0 (0%)	1(0.66%)
12-14	7 (4.66%)	3 (2%)	8 (5.33%)	2(1.33%)	5(3.33%)	6 (4%)	1(0.66%)	4(2.66%)
15-17	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5(3.33%)

**Discussion**

Parental presence or absence during dental procedure is one of the methods described in the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry for behavior modification<sup>7</sup>. This guideline recommends a judicial decision making on part of the practitioner to benefit from either parental presence or absence to achieve cooperation of the child. The dentist should evaluate the pros and cons of presence of the parent, and this decision should be based on individual child and the parental involvement of that particular child. The ultimate goal of parental presence or absence is to minimize the child's anxiety

towards dental treatment and achieve a positive dental experience. It is also aimed to prevent negative behavior and establish effective communication between the child and the dentist<sup>6</sup>.

Concerning the relationships between child characteristics and parents' desire to remain with the child, the results concerning the role of the child's age are consistent with previous findings<sup>7,1,8</sup> showing that the younger the child was, the more the parents wanted to be with their child. In our study, most of the educated parent's wish to be present with the child during dental treatment. In several other studies, including

those by Abushal et<sup>11</sup> in Saudi Arabia, Peretz et al<sup>12</sup> in Israel, Crowley et al<sup>13</sup> in Ireland, and Kamp et al<sup>11</sup> in Germany, most of the educated parents expressed a wish to be present in the practicing room. The dentist technique of the parent's presence may be used as a reward and positive reinforcement. Under circumstances where child behavior proves uncooperative to all reasonable efforts to secure the child's attention, the technique initially involves clarification to the parent on how they wish to use the parent's presence to shape the child's behavior<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, the parents should be prepared to leave the dental operatory if the child is uncooperative. This arrangement needs to be made before the child is seated in the dental chair, and it is important that the child knows about the agreement<sup>15</sup>. The results of this study indicate a distinct difference in the frequency of parental presence with regard to the number of dental visits. Parents were more willing to accompany their child in the initial visits of dental treatments but there number of presence decreases with increase in number of dental visits and increase in age. One of the important findings of this study is that more parents were willing to accompany their female child as the age of their child increases. This finding clearly reflects the religious, cultural and social environment of the region.

### Conclusion

Presence of parents plays important role in the dental treatment of the child. Advantages of parent's presence are that child feels secure, parents can aid in reinforcement of treatment and dentist can give preventive advice to parents for their child's dentition. Disadvantages are that parents communicate their anxiety to child, may interfere between child and dentist relationship and child may get negative reinforcement if parents too sympathetic.

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