



## Effect of Dentist's Attire on Patient's Perceptions and Preferences

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**Aim:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate effect of dentist's attire on patient's perceptions and preferences for diagnostic and treatment purposes. The objective was to determine whether the way a dentist dresses is an important factor in the degree of trust and confidence among respondents..

**Introduction:** The doctor-patient relationship is a fundamental aspect of patient care . Research has demonstrated that a patient's initial perception plays a crucial role in the development of this relationship.<sup>(1)</sup> During this interaction, a patient develops a first impression of his or her dentist <sup>(2)</sup> based upon the practitioner's verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as personal attributes like clothing, grooming, and cleanliness. <sup>(7)</sup> Sociologists and psychologists have documented the effect of one's appearance on significant life experiences.<sup>(3-6)</sup> In this study, the authors determine whether the way a dentist dresses makes a significant impact on the patient's perception of their abilities and conduct. <sup>(7)</sup>

**Result:** 450 respondents between 18-80 years were recorded; 51.8% (n = 233) were males, 68.9% (n = 310) hailed from a middle socioeconomic background and 39.8% (n = 179) had completed an undergraduate program. Majority (70.7%; n = 318) had been to a dentist before and 45.1% (n = 203) participants concurred that the attitude of the practitioner was the first noticeable thing. 65.3% (n = 294) of the respondents agreed that the dentist's attire and appearance does reflect his professional capabilities. Respondents of both genders significantly favored a male, professionally-dressed dentist with the white coat for diagnosis (21.3%, n = 96) and treatment (19.8%; n = 89).

**Methodology:** This was a cross-sectional, observational study. An interview-based questionnaire was designed to evaluate the inclination of patients towards choosing a dental practitioner for diagnosis and treatment after reviewing 2 sets of 6 pictures of a male and female dentist. All the pictures were same with the exception of the dentists' attire:

- **Formal** (suit with neck tie for male dentist; tailored trouser for female dentist)
- **Professional** (shirt, neck tie, and white coat for male; kurta shalwar with white coat for female)
- **Surgical** (scrubs for both male and female)
- **Casual** (jeans and T-shirt for both male and female)
- **Traditional** (kurta shalwar for both male and female)
- **Religious** (kurta shalwar with Islamic head cap for male; kurta shalwar with head scarf for female)

The questionnaire also took into account the participant's demographics, educational background and socioeconomic details.

•Sample size: 450

•Analysis: Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and correlation with the help of the IBM Corporation, SPSS Inc. Chicago, IL, USA v.20 software.

**Conclusion:** The effect of a dentist's attire has a significant impact on the patient's perception of their capabilities and on their overall preference for diagnosis and treatment. It was surprising to encounter results that contradicted the expected general inclination of Pakistani population towards traditional and religious attire. Furthermore, it was unexpected to come across Pakistani women preferring male professionals over females. A professionally-dressed practitioner with a white coat, preferably a male, while providing diagnostic and treatment services may favorably influence trust and confidence-building in dental encounters.

**MOST POPULAR MALE AND FEMALE DENTIST FOR DIAGNOSIS:**

**LEAST POPULAR MALE AND FEMALE DENTIST FOR DIAGNOSIS:**

**MOST POPULAR MALE AND FEMALE DENTIST FOR TREATMENT:**

**LEAST POPULAR MALE AND FEMALE DENTIST FOR TREATMENT:**



Male Professional  
n = 96

Female Professional  
n = 50

Male Traditional  
n = 03

Female Casual  
n = 02

Male Professional  
n = 89

Female Surgical  
n = 52

Male Religious  
n = 01

Female Casual  
n = 00

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