

DRESS TO PROFESS:

What should paediatric dental staff wear?

“It is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting social signals. Every costume tells a story, about its wearer.”-Desmond Morris (1977)

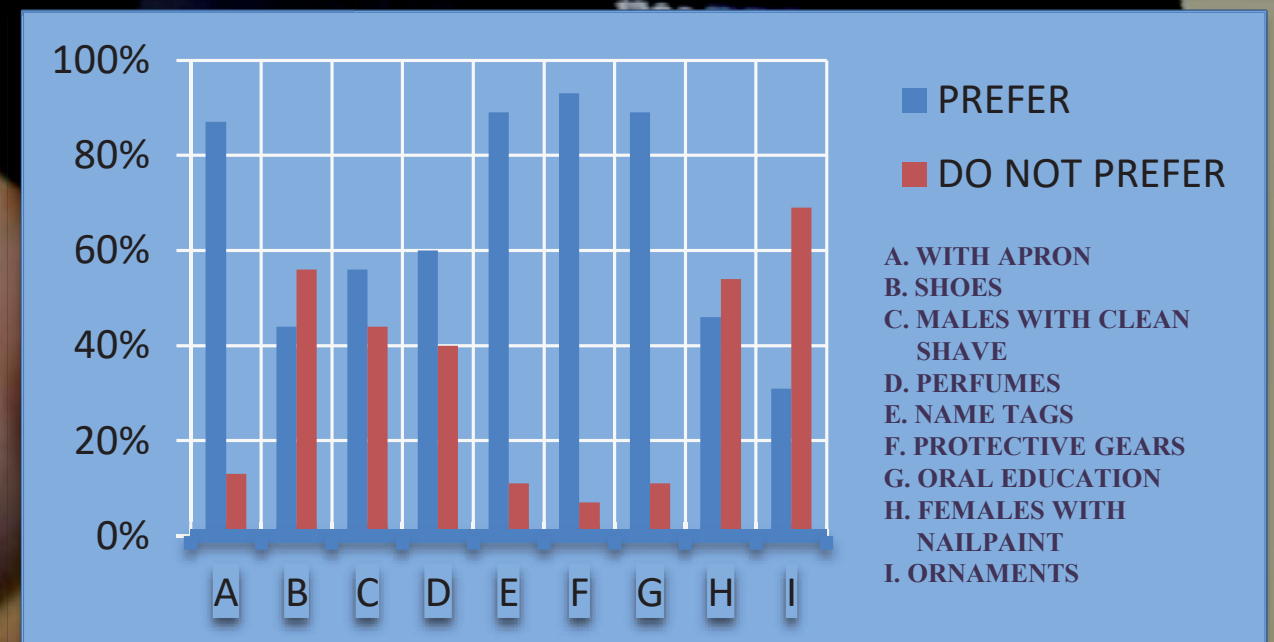
INTRODUCTION: The meaning of a piece of clothing changes the moment it's worn as it becomes associated with its wearer's attire and can demonstrate affiliation to a particular group. Dress as an analytical tool can easily mislead if studied with wrong assumptions and without a detailed analysis. Parents harbour conscious and unconscious biases when it comes to the clinical demeanour of dental staff in a hospital.

METHODOLOGY: Data was collected using a validated questionnaire from 103 parents attending the Department of Paediatric Dentistry.

OBJECTIVE: To assess parental attitudes towards dental assistant attire.
: Effect of positive changes that would make children and their parents more comfortable..

PARENTAL PREFERENCE [%AGE]	
APRON	87%
APRON WITH ALL BUTTONS CLOSED	80%
NAME TAGS	89%
PERFUME	60%
FORMAL SHOES	44%
TIED HAIR	85%
CLEAN SHAVE (MALE)	56%
NAIL PAINT (FEMALE)	54%
PROTECTIVE GEARS	93%
ORAL EDUCATORS	89%
ORNAMENTS	31%

RESULTS



DISCUSSION: This study revealed that parents place a great deal of emphasis on dental staff attire. Parents favoured formal dress as they believed in “targeted attire to improve likelihood of rapport” (TAILOR). Parents ranked multicoloured apron with buttons closed with the name tags on the left side. They preferred the male assistants to be clean shaven and females to have tied hair and groomed nails with minimal accessories. 89% of the parents felt that assistants could play the role of oral educators.

CONCLUSION: Professionalism is multi-factorial and is important in engendering a sense of comfort and confidence during treatment. The nonverbal communication attributed to an attire/appearance can play a major role in the child-dentist relationship. Making small changes in one's appearance can have a big impact on decreasing the anxiety levels of the child.