



## Awareness Among Parents about Pediatric Dentistry as a Specialty in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region- A Survey based Cross-sectional Study

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### Abstract

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### Introduction

Pediatric dentistry is an age-defined specialty that provides both primary and comprehensive preventive and therapeutic oral health care for infants and children through adolescence, including those with special health care needs. It is an accepted and established practice globally. However, in India, Pediatric dentistry is yet an upcoming profession and the awareness of it being a specialty is less.

Defranc et al. (2008) reported that the single dentist concept for all oral health problems is still prevalent among the general population. A common person usually differentiates between cardiologist and neurologist, but cannot distinguish between different dental specialties. Despite the improvisation occurring in dental specializations, majority of the people are still ignorant about the qualification of their treating dentist.

A young child's dental environment is influenced by parental knowledge, attitudes and beliefs surrounding oral health. Against this background, we have assessed the awareness amongst parents about Pediatric dentistry as a speciality.

### Materials And Methods:

#### Study Design

This cross-sectional survey was conducted to assess the awareness about pediatric dentistry as a speciality

among parents across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. It was reviewed and approved by IEC (Institutional ethical committee) of D.Y. Patil University School of Dentistry (IREB/2021/PEDO/016).

#### Sample Size:

The sample size for the study was estimated to be 300 at the 95% confidence interval, obtained by a response rate of 88%.

#### Inclusion Criteria:

The survey was conducted amongst parents of children between 0-12 years of age who have visited only a general dentist, can read and understand English / Hindi / Marathi and have a smartphone with access to the internet.

#### Exclusion Criteria:

Parents who consulted Pediatric dentists for the dental treatment of their children and those who were not willing to provide consent to participate in the study.

#### Methodology:

A pre-structured and close ended questionnaire in English, Hindi and Marathi language was distributed to the participants as a Google form, which was validated by 10 well experienced Pediatric dentists.

The participants were explained about the purpose and scope of the research study. Informed consent in the above mentioned languages was taken prior to be included in the study.

**Results**

The assessment of parents’ awareness about Pediatric dentistry as a speciality was conducted as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1 : (Awareness of parents regarding pediatric dentistry as a speciality)**

Question	YES(%)	NO (%)
1. Do you think treating the milk teeth is important?	46.3%	53.7%
2. Were you satisfied by the treatment provided?	47.3%	52.7%
3. Do children require a specialist for their dental treatment according to you?	51%	49%
4. Are you aware of a Pediatric dental specialty for children?	59%	41%
5. Do you know that Pediatric dentistry is a 3 year specialization course after completion of a Bachelors degree in Dental Surgery (B.D.S)?	46.7%	53.3%
6. Do you know that a Pedodontist/Pediatric dentist is specially trained in child psychology and behavior management?	33.3%	66.7%
7. Do you know that a Pedodontist/Pediatric dentist is trained to treat and manage children with special needs as well?	53%	47%
8. Have you ever been referred to a Pedodontist/Pediatric dentist by a General dentist/doctor?	47%	53%

**Figure. 1**

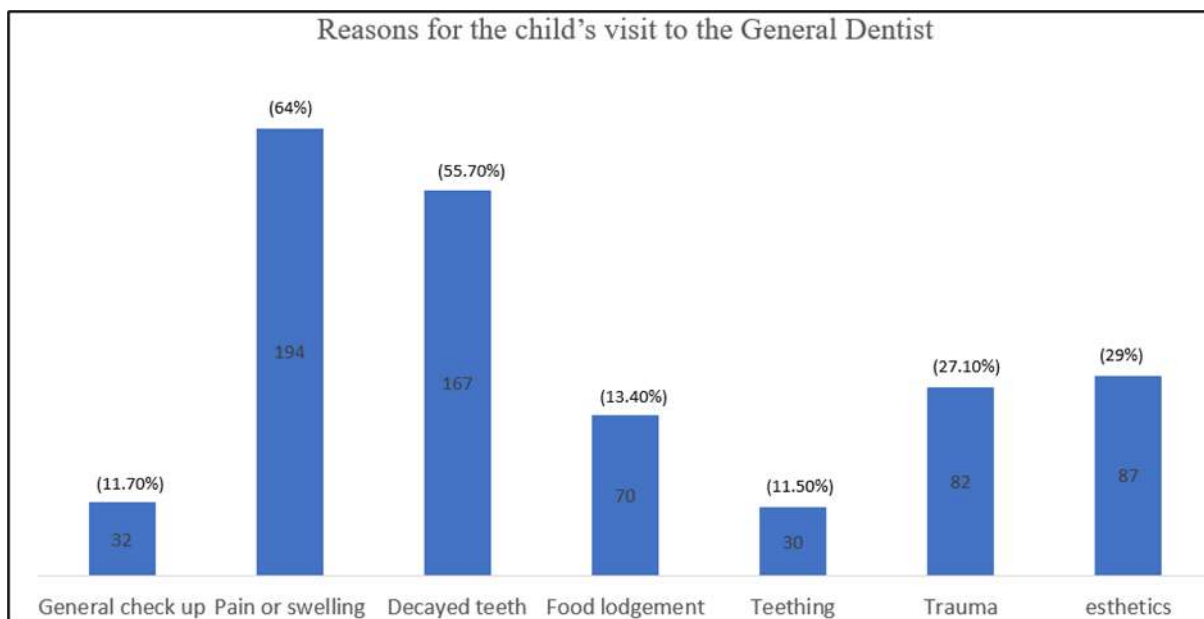
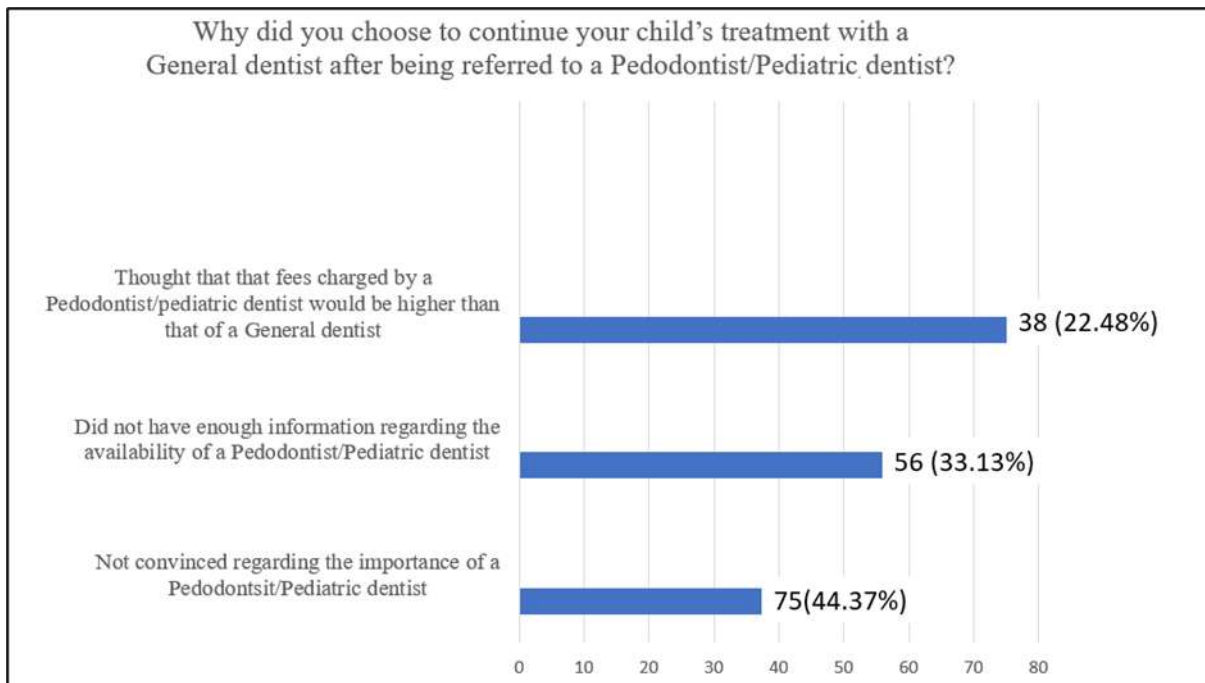


Figure. 2



**Discussion**

To improve child oral health, there is a need to assess the awareness regarding Pediatric dentistry amongst parents since pediatric dentists promote the dental health of children as well as serve as educational resources for parents.

Most parents only visited a dentist at the onset of symptoms and the concept of regular dental check-ups does not prevail. According to AAPD, a child's first dental visit should be by their first birthday. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** This enables the parents to obtain the correct information regarding maintenance and care of oral health. It familiarizes the child with the dental office environment and staff before they experience any tooth decay or pain, thus enabling a positive dental experience and patient cooperation in the future.

Among 300 participants, only a minority (46.3%) believed that treating the milk teeth was important.

It was observed that only about half the sample population were aware of Pediatric dentistry as a specialty for children and 46.70% knew that it is a 3-year specialization degree after graduation (BDS), the scope of which includes training in child psychology & behavior management (33.30%) and management

of children with special needs (53%), reported similarly by Winnier et al.

52.70% of the parents reported that they were dissatisfied by the treatment provided by general dentists and hence they felt that a specialist was required for the same. This could be due to greater amount of patience and sensitivity required while treating children which might not be well cultivated in general dentists or the fact that they might not be able to give a customized and interactive appointment every time keeping the child's age and temperament in mind.

47% of the survey population have been referred to a pediatric dentist by the General Dentist of which, majority of them thought that the fees charged by them would be higher. The resistance or hesitation of visiting a Pediatric dentist may be due the fact that the parents have trust in their dentist and would feel more comfortable in getting their child treated under their care. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Post completion of the survey, the parents were provided with an E-brochure that included instructions for oral health care.

**Conclusion**

This study concludes that awareness among parents regarding pediatric dentistry as a specialty for children is lacking and there is a need to instill a sense of awareness and educate them regarding the same through various awareness programs and camps.

Though visiting a general dentist is not discouraged or discredited, the role of a pediatric specialist should be emphasized, making it important for gynecologists, pediatricians, general physicians as well as Anganwadi workers who are the first point of contact for child health needs, to counsel parents regarding the same so as to maintain good oral health of the patients from childhood through adolescence.

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