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DENTAL ANXIETY IN FUTURE AND CURRENT ORTHODONTIC PATIENTS

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Dental anxiety is the most common psychological condition seen in clinical practice; however it is not typically associated with orthodontic treatment because of the lack of evoking stimuli (i.e., drills, needles). Its prevalence in orthodontic patients has not been studied but is reported anecdotally.

Objective: To assess the prevalence of dental anxiety and factors contributing to dental anxiety in current and future orthodontic patients.

Methods: Patients from the Faculty of Dentistry undergraduate and graduate orthodontic clinics and a private orthodontic office completed a questionnaire including the Modified Dental Anxiety Scale (MDAS); a Modified version of the MDAS adapted for orthodontic treatment (MDASO) (both scored 1-not anxious to 5-extremely anxious; sum score >15 =dentally anxious); and a ranking of concerns about orthodontic treatment (scored 1-not at all to 5-very much). Participant inclusion criteria included subjects >12 years and able to read the questionnaire

Results: 675 patient questionnaires were collected (60.4% private practice; 64.3% female; 24.9% new patients; 85.5% between 12-20 years). 22.8% were dentally anxious and 18.7% anxious about orthodontic treatment. University clinic (public) patients reported higher MDAS and MDASO scores ($p<0.05$), no significant difference was found between future and current patients, gender, and age. Dentally anxious patients reported their relationship with the orthodontist, perceptions of treatment and treatment factors as contributing to their anxiety.

Conclusions: Dental anxiety related to orthodontic treatment was prevalent in both populations, especially in public patients. This study supports the belief that dental anxiety is multifaceted and contributing factors extend beyond traditionally accepted stimuli of drills and needles.