

Dental Anxiety in Adults: Patterns of Prevalence and Demographic Influences

Abstract

Dental anxiety continues to be a significant barrier to oral healthcare, often resulting in delayed or avoided dental visits. This study investigates how widespread dental anxiety is among adults and explores how demographic characteristics may influence it. A survey using the Modified Dental Anxiety Scale (MDAS) was conducted among 500 adults from diverse backgrounds. Findings showed that about one-third of respondents reported moderate to high levels of dental anxiety. The data also revealed that women and younger adults were more likely to experience such anxiety. These insights highlight the importance of identifying at-risk groups to improve patient engagement and reduce anxiety-related avoidance of dental care.

Introduction

Fear of dental treatment, commonly referred to as dental anxiety, affects a significant portion of the adult population. This fear can discourage individuals from seeking regular dental care, leading to poorer oral health outcomes over time. Dental anxiety is often shaped by various factors, including prior negative dental experiences, societal influences, and personal characteristics such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Understanding these contributing elements is crucial for dental professionals aiming to offer empathetic and accessible care. This study explores the prevalence of dental anxiety among adults and examines how demographic patterns contribute to its distribution.

Objectives

- Measure how common dental anxiety is among adults.
- Identify demographic groups that are more likely to experience dental anxiety.
- Examine how previous dental experiences affect anxiety levels.

Synopsis

This research explores how common dental anxiety is among adults and which groups are most affected. Using a standard anxiety scale, the study looks at how age, gender,

income, and education levels relate to dental fear. The aim is to help dental providers understand which patients may need more support to feel comfortable with dental care.

Methods and Materials

Design: Descriptive, cross-sectional study.

Participants: 500 adults aged 18 years and older from dental clinics.

Tool Used: A questionnaire with demographic questions and the Modified Dental Anxiety Scale (MDAS).

Data Analysis: Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 26. Relationships between demographic factors and anxiety levels were assessed using chi-square and logistic regression tests.

Inclusion Criteria

- Adults (18+ years)
- Previous dental visit experience
- Provided informed consent

Exclusion Criteria

- Diagnosed with unrelated mental health conditions
- Emergency dental patients
- Incomplete responses

Results

Of the 500 participants, 32% had moderate to high dental anxiety. Women reported more anxiety than men (40% vs. 22%). People aged 18–30 showed the highest anxiety rates. Lower levels of education and negative past dental experiences were also linked to higher anxiety. Regression analysis showed that gender, age, and dental history were strong predictors.

Discussion

The results match earlier studies showing that dental anxiety is more common among women and younger adults. Education and income also played a role, likely because of

differences in access to care and awareness. The strong link between bad past experiences and current anxiety highlights the need for gentle, patient-centered care. By focusing on education and communication, dental professionals can reduce patient fear and improve oral health outcomes.

Conclusion

Dental anxiety is a widespread issue with clear demographic patterns. Recognizing which groups are most affected can help dentists tailor their approach to reduce fear and improve patient care. Better communication, patient education, and a supportive environment are key to overcoming this challenge.

References

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