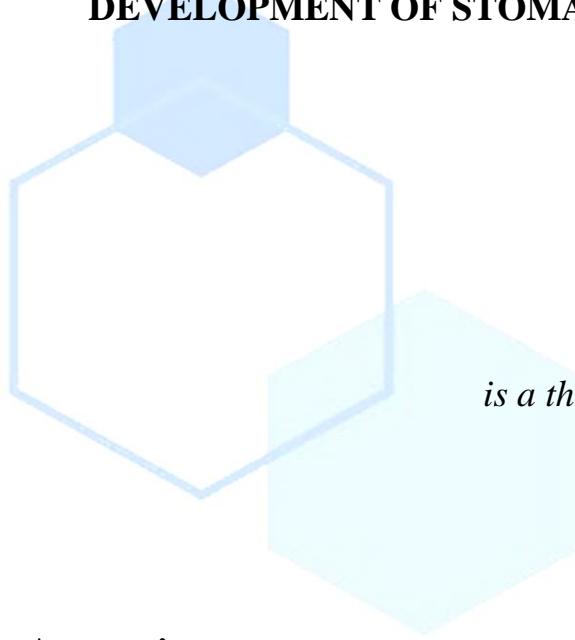


THE ORIGINS AND FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF STOMATOPHOBIA IN CHILDREN.



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Annotation

Dental phobia, or a fear of dental procedures, is one of the most common fears among people. It is estimated that between 35% and 68% of the global population experience some level of dental anxiety. Delivery of effective dental treatment to a child patient requires thorough knowledge to recognize dental fear and its management by the application of behavioral management techniques. This fear can be particularly intense, leading to a condition known as stomatophobia. Stomatophobia can develop in childhood and continue to affect people throughout their lives.

Key words: stomatophobia, children, dental fear, etiological factors, prevalence.

The development of many dental problems begins in early childhood. However, the fear of dental treatment in both parents and children can create a serious problem with cooperation, and this prevents dentists from taking necessary measures. Only when children or adults experience unbearable pain do they seek help. A child's behavior pattern in any situation is governed by his/her inherited physical and mental endowment and, as he develops, by the conditioning he receives through contact with the environment. The former, except within certain narrow limits, cannot be altered. The latter can be controlled and developed, so the child will grow to have a well-

adjusted personality suited to the situation. Children have relatively limited communication skills and are less able to express their fears and anxieties. Children's inability to cope with threatening dental stimuli often manifests as behavior management problems. Early recognition and management of this dental fear is the key to delivering effective dental treatment to the child patient. This leads to a high prevalence and severity of tooth decay, as well as a large number of teeth being extracted, not only in adults but also in children. This justifies the significant medical and social importance of the issue of dental fear.

Stomatophobia in children is one of the urgent problems of modern pediatric dentistry, as it significantly affects the timeliness of seeking dental care and the quality of treatment. The purpose of this article is to analyze the prevalence of stomatophobia in childhood and identify the main etiological factors contributing to its formation. Based on the analysis of domestic and foreign scientific sources, it has been established that stomatophobia occurs in a significant part of the child population and has a multifactorial nature, including psychoemotional, social and medical causes. Understanding the mechanisms of dental anxiety formation in children allows us to develop effective preventive and corrective measures. (*Figura 1*)



Figura 1. Preliminary preparation before a dental procedure.

Introduction

The success of modeling in reducing dental fear and anxiety has been well documented in the past; despite this, it has not been widely practiced as a routine

behavior management technique. In addition, most of the research on this subject dates back to two or three decades ago, and there is little published literature on the effectiveness of this technique from recent times. Dental anxiety and fear are common reasons why children refuse to visit the dentist. Various studies have found that signs of dental phobia are present in 30-80% of children, indicating the urgency of this issue. The presence of significant fear can complicate the implementation of treatment and preventive measures, contribute to the progression of dental problems, and lead to negative attitudes towards dentistry in adulthood. (*Figura 2*)



Figura 2. Causes of dental fear.

There are a number of non-pharmacological or psychological techniques that aim to manage patient behavior. Some methods aim to improve the communication process, while others are intended to eliminate inappropriate behavior or reduce anxiety. Most recommended techniques for modifying child behavior during dentistry have involved various forms of pre-exposure to the dental setting and procedures. One such technique, modeling, is based on the Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of observing and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional

reactions of others. Bandura established that modeling or learning by observation worked not only for acquisition of new behaviors but also for reducing undesirable behavior. One of the primary principles of this technique is Vicarious Extinction, wherein “fearful and avoidant behavior can be extinguished vicariously through observation without any adverse consequences accruing to the performer.” Hence, this technique allows for “learning without performance,” and thus, the child learns to eliminate fearful behavior without incurring the aversive consequences of such behavior.

The prevalence of stomatophobia varies depending on a number of factors, including the age of the child, socio-economic status of the family, and cultural and regional characteristics. Children of preschool and elementary school age are most likely to experience dental anxiety. As children grow older, the intensity of their fear may decrease, but if left unaddressed, it can persist and become a stable phobia.

The etiological factors of stomatophobia

Stomatophobia in children can be caused by a variety of factors, including:

- Psychological factors - increased anxiety, low stress tolerance, and the child's temperament.
- Negative experience of dental treatment - painful procedures, lack of adequate anesthesia, and incorrect behavior of medical staff.
- Social factors - parental anxiety, negative stories about dental treatment, and adult behavior patterns.
- Medical factors - late first visit to the dentist, presence of complicated forms of caries, and the need for invasive treatment.

Discussion:

An analysis of literature data indicates that stomatophobia in children is not a standalone issue, but rather the result of the combined influence of psychological and environmental factors. Early intervention is crucial, including the development of a positive attitude towards dentistry, the use of coping strategies, and an individualized approach for each child.

Conclusion.

Stomatophobia is widespread among children and has a multifactorial etiology. Early diagnosis and an integrated approach to the prevention of dental anxiety can improve the effectiveness of dental treatment and improve the quality of life of the children's population.

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