

Parental Perceptions on Being Present in the Dental Operator, A Systematic Review



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Background

- Pediatric dental care is often a source of anxiety and fear for children, which can affect their cooperation during treatment. As a result, various behavior management techniques (BMTs) are employed to reduce distress and ensure that the dental procedure proceeds smoothly. Among these techniques, parental presence in the dental operator has been suggested as a potential strategy to alleviate children's anxiety and improve cooperation.^{1 2}
- However, there is variability in parental preferences regarding parent presence during their child's dental visit.^{3 4}
- The AAPD acknowledges that parents can play a critical role in their child's dental treatment by providing emotional support and encouragement.⁵

Purpose

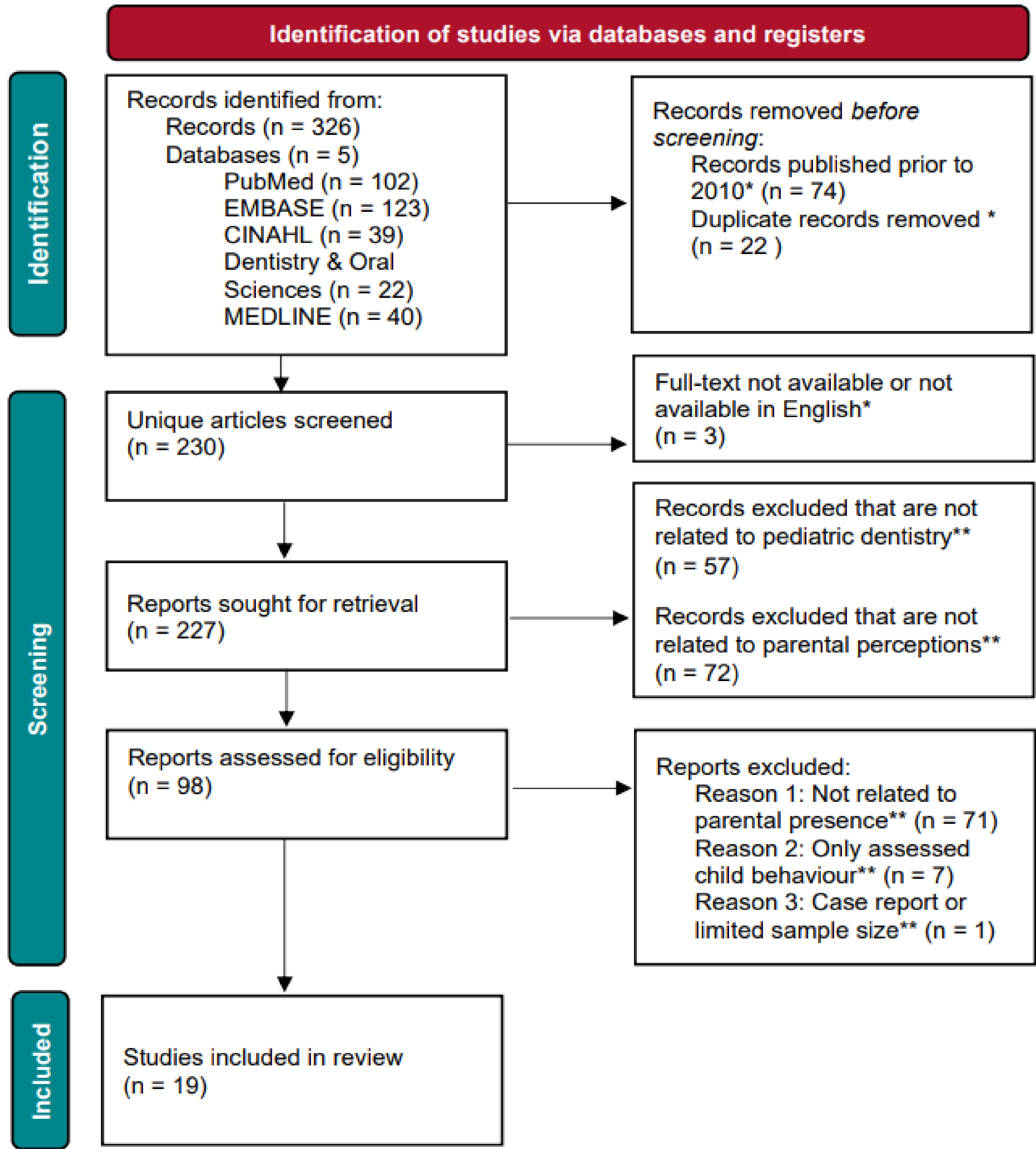
- The purpose of this systematic literature review is to assess parent or guardian attitudes and beliefs about parental presence inside the dental operator.

Methods

- PICO strategy used. **Population** = Parents of children undergoing dental treatment. **Intervention** = Parental presence in the dental operator during child's treatment. **Comparison** = Parental absence in the dental operator during child's treatment. **Outcome** = parent acceptance of required treatment.
- A comprehensive search was conducted to identify relevant studies using UNMC's access to the following literature databases: MEDLINE, CINAHL, PubMed, EMBASE, and Dentistry Source
- A combination of keywords was used for each search strategy including "parental perceptions" "children's dentistry" and "dental operator"
- Inclusion criteria included peer-reviewed articles published in English within the last 15 years with a focus on parental perceptions.
- Studies were excluded if they did not involve parents with school age children, parental thoughts or perceptions, or were not published in English.
- A quality assessment was conducted to evaluate methodological rigor of included studies and what potential bias may exist. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes and patterns across the included studies.

Results

- A total of 19 studies were selected for final analysis.
- Few studies solely evaluated parental perceptions on being present, with most having used surveys to look at the broader scope of behavior management acceptance.
- Particular studies found that 66%⁶ and then 69%⁷ prefer to stay with their child for operator procedures.
- In another study, 50%⁸ stated they were even uncomfortable leaving. their child during treatment



*Indicates records excluded using automation tools
**Indicates records excluded by a human.

Figure 1. PRISMA⁹ flow diagram for the systematic review of parental perceptions on being present in the dental operator

Discussion

- Preference for being present in the dental operator varies by cultural context, and studies on American, Colombian, Spanish, and Turkish parents reveal differing views on being present during treatments. Some parents prefer to be present to comfort their child or to monitor the procedure, while others prefer to stay out of the operator due to concerns over interfering with the treatment.
- Parents generally report higher satisfaction when they are involved or present during the dental visit, particularly if they understand the behavior management techniques being used.
- Studies also address parental acceptance of other behavior management techniques. Parents are more accepting of non-invasive behavior guidance techniques (e.g., positive reinforcement, distraction techniques), while even others may accept more invasive methods (e.g., Hand-Over-Mouth Exercise, sedation).
- Educational efforts that inform parents about the procedures and behavior management methods can increase their comfort and acceptance of different approaches.
- A balanced approach of allowing parents to be passive observers (rather than actively involved) is often favored by both practitioners and parents in studies. This provides reassurance to the child without overwhelming them with additional stimuli.

Conclusion

- We discovered that parents generally prefer to be present during their child's dental appointment, particularly to reduce anxiety and provide comfort. However, the effect of parental presence on child's behavior is nuanced, varying based on factors such as child temperament, the procedure being performed, and cultural context. A personalized approach, where parents are educated and allowed to choose whether to be present, seems to be the most effective strategy for pediatric dentistry.

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