

The Level of Awareness of Fake Dental Veneers Among Dental and Non-Dental Students Studying in Malaysia: A Cross-Sectional Study

Jafar Abdulla Mohamed Usman*, Kah Heng Kung, Shen Huong Tieu, Farah Najwa Binti Aidil Fithri

Department of Prosthetic Dentistry,
Faculty of Dentistry, MAHSA University,
Jenjarom, Selangor, Malaysia.

***Corresponding author:**

Jafar Abdulla Mohamed Usman
Department of Prosthetic Dentistry, Faculty
of Dentistry, MAHSA University, Jenjarom,
Selangor, Malaysia.
Email: drjafara@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background: Lately, there has been an increase in the placement of fake veneers by unregistered individuals without a license from the Malaysian Dental Council.

Aim: To determine the level of awareness of fake veneers among MAHSA University dental students and non-dental students.

Materials and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted involving 350 dental and non-dental students in MAHSA University. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the students. The data were then analyzed using an independent t-test to determine the level of awareness of fake veneers among dental and non-dental students.

Results: Among 350 participants, 147 were dental (42%) and 203 non-dental students (58%), with a mean age of 22.69 ± 1.68 . There was a significant mean difference between the level of awareness of fake veneers among dental students and non-dental students ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: The majority of dental students were able to differentiate between genuine and fake veneers, while many non-dental students could not. Their awareness level of fake veneers must be improved for their own safety.

Keywords: Dental veneers, Porcelain, Awareness, Aesthetic dentistry, Social media.

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1. Introduction

Recently, dental aesthetics have become more crucial in modern restorative dentistry. We are seeing more patients visiting the dental clinics with high expectations for us, dentists, to make their teeth look beautiful. Traditionally, composite restorations were widely used in aesthetic dental restorations but were later shown to suffer from limited durability, liable to discolouration and marginal fractures [1]. For many years, dentists have succeeded in providing these aesthetic restorations, such as dental veneers, for these demanding patients. Dental veneers provide excellent aesthetics, minimal plaque accumulation, stain resistance, and long-term longevity in the

oral cavity. It also has high acceptance rates by patients and is considered to be a relatively safe treatment for patients [2]. Apart from its aesthetic outcomes, it can also close up existing spaces, provide better alignment of teeth and also solve functional problems in the anterior teeth region [3].

With the emergence of dental veneers being in high demand among patients due to their aesthetic predictability and conservative tooth preparations [4], more patients have come to know of this and are very keen to seek this treatment to improve their smile aesthetics.

Aesthetic dentistry has also been lately influenced by the increasing accessibility of online and social media information, which has led to the rise of highly demanding patients [5]. However, there have been many unregistered individuals engaging in the placement of fake veneers lately. Many unlicensed, non-dental professionals sell different types of brands of these products online [6]. These procedures are done in hotel rooms, clients' homes, salons and even on roadsides. These fake dentists, also known as beauticians, put their patients at increased risk of morbidity and even mortality (death) with their poor infection control protocols. Affected individuals who have been duped by these irresponsible practitioners not only have to pay a substantial amount for the fake or wrongful treatment, but also suffer greatly from procedures which may leave irreparable health damage [7]. This study aimed to determine the level of awareness of fake veneers among MAHSA University dental students and non-dental students.

2. Materials and methods

This study was approved by the Research Management Centre in Mahsa University, Malaysia (Ethical clearance number: RMC/EC51), with a study duration of 6 months. This study followed the Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) checklist guidelines and complies with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

This cross-sectional study was conducted using a convenience sampling method; data were collected through an online questionnaire created using Google Forms. This questionnaire, accompanied by an explanatory letter requesting participation and ensuring anonymity, was distributed among dental and non-dental students at MAHSA University, Bandar Saujana Putra Campus, Selangor, Malaysia. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

The questionnaire was made in English and focused on three major areas. The first section gathered demographic data, including gender, age, and faculty. The second section measured the participants' general knowledge about genuine veneers. The third section aimed to determine the participants' ability to differentiate between fake and genuine veneers, as shown in Table 1.

The questionnaire's content validity was assessed by two experts, followed by pilot testing (face

validity) with 30 participants. The questionnaire was modified and finalized for data collection.

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 26.0, IBM Corporation, NY, USA. Student's t-test for independent samples was used. A $p \leq 0.05$ was used to report the statistical significance of results.

Table 1. Online questionnaire

Sections	Questions
1. Patient Info and Demographics	A. Gender B. Age C. Faculty
2. Awareness of genuine veneers	A. Do you know the difference between genuine and fake veneers? B. Genuine veneers are customized for different individuals following their tooth shade and colour
3. Awareness of fake veneers	A. Fake veneers are done in places other than dental clinics, such as hotel rooms, clients' homes, office buildings, spas, or roadside markets. B. Fake veneers are done without infection control (Operator not wearing a mask or gloves) C. Fake veneers are bulky and unattractive D. Fake veneers cause impingement to the gums and lead to gum inflammation E. Fake veneers will cause bad occlusion (bad bite) F. Picture shows fake veneers G. Picture shows genuine veneers

3. Results

A total of 350 students from MAHSA University answered the questionnaires. Table 2 shows the characteristics of respondents. Out of 350 respondents, this study managed to receive an even distribution between male and female respondents, with 175 (50%) male and 175 (50%) female respondents. 147 of the respondents were dental students (42%), and 203 of them were non-dental students (58%), with a mean age of 22.69 ± 1.68 .

Table 3 shows the difference between the level of awareness of fake veneers among MAHSA University dental students and non-dental students. It can be seen that there was a significant mean (SD) difference between the level of awareness on fake veneers between dental students (0.90 ± 0.18) compared to non-dental students (0.70 ± 0.24). A significant difference ($p < 0.001$) was observed between dental and nondental students.

Table 4 shows the knowledge to differentiate between genuine and fake veneers calculated depending on the percentage of correct responses

for each question regarding the difference between genuine and fake veneers. Overall, dental students (61%) had more knowledge to differentiate between genuine and fake veneers compared to non-dental students (39%).

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency, n (%)	Mean (SD)
Male	175 (50)	
Female	175 (50)	
Dental students	147 (42)	
Non-Dental students	203 (58)	
Age		22.69 (1.68)

Table 3. The difference in the level of awareness of fake veneers among MAHSA University dental students and non-dental students

	Mean (SD)	t-test (df)	p-value
Dental students	0.90 (0.18)	8.645 (348)	<0.001
Non-dental students	0.70 (0.24)		

Table 4. Knowledge to differentiate between genuine and fake veneers

	Frequency, n	%
Dental students	113	61.1
Non-dental students	72	38.9

4. Discussion

The results of the present study showed a significant mean difference between the level of awareness of fake veneers among dental students and non-dental students (<0.001). This was an expected result as it was natural for dental students to have more friends who are dentists, and also being in an environment where they are more up to date on the latest trends in dentistry, as opposed to the non-dental students. This makes dental students more aware of the emergence of fake veneer treatments by beauticians compared to non-dental students.

From questionnaire responses, the majority of non-dental students could identify that fake veneers are not done in dental clinics, but could not identify that fake veneers are done without proper infection control (92.6%). This is a worrying sign as the majority of these non-dental students are not aware that they could put themselves at risk of contracting harmful diseases if they seek fake veneer treatments from beauticians, as they do not practice proper infection control protocols while carrying out the procedure.

Some non-dental students (46%) do not find fake veneers bulky and unattractive. This is also an alarming finding, as some non-dental students

actually found fake veneer treatment done by beauticians to be aesthetically beautiful, and this might put them in danger if they seek treatment from these beauticians to improve their smile. As it is well known, dental veneers are a conservative method for a perfect smile that can impact a person's image and self-esteem, which is why many individuals are willing to undergo this treatment [8]. However, with a lack of awareness and knowledge on this matter, one might just seek dental veneer treatment from an unregistered dentist instead of a beautician, and they will not even know the difference, which is extremely dangerous. They should be educated about its proper use [9].

Most dental students (61%) can differentiate genuine and fake veneers, while only a few non-dental students (39%) did so. A study conducted assessing knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Saudis and other Arab countries found that these populations mainly depend on magazines, social media, and friends [10]. Dental students undergo many clinical and theoretical training in the study of teeth anatomy, physiology and also aesthetics during their Undergraduate training programme, and therefore they have a good knowledge of how genuine veneers should be done in contrast to non-dental students with lesser exposure to these trainings. The Care for laminate veneers had been associated with significantly higher rates of satisfaction post-treatment [11]. Although, naturally, we can say dental students should have more knowledge and awareness of fake veneers compared to non-dental students; by carrying out this study, we managed to educate, provide information and also gain feedback from non-dental students on the booming trend of fake veneers done by fake dentists or beauticians that have successfully fooled many Malaysian individuals into seeking the treatment. This might be because such types of veneers are still new, and not everyone knows about them. [12, 13]. Many articles indicated the growing trend of social media and its use in dental marketing. [14]. We hope this study will not only raise awareness on fake veneers among MAHSA University students, but also the general public, especially in the Malaysian population, to not be duped into seeking this treatment that can potentially put them in serious health problems.

The rapidly changing trends regarding fake dental veneers are mostly driven by social media by unlicensed professionals. This cross-sectional study was conducted using self-reported

responses, collecting the data through an online questionnaire made using Google Form, so there is a chance of response bias in terms of sample representation, inequitable gender and reduced generalizability. A cross-sectional survey might not capture the newest, emerging types of fake veneers. Even though awareness of fake veneers among dental students might be high, the actual number of individuals admitting to using them is often very small, which limits the ability to draw strong conclusions about the demographic or psychological factors driving the demand. While comparing dental and non-dental students is valuable, the high knowledge level of dental students can skew the overall average, potentially limiting the actual lack of awareness among the general public.

5. Conclusion

The present study was conducted to determine the level of awareness of fake veneers among MAHSA University dental students and non-dental students. It was found that there was a significant difference between the level of awareness of fake veneers among MAHSA University dental students and non-dental students. The majority of MAHSA University dental students were able to differentiate between genuine and fake veneers; however, given the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported responses, with online data, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

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