

Review Article

Psychosocial benefits of dental corrections in adolescents and adults

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Received: 01 August 2024

Revised: 12 August 2024

Accepted: 20 August 2024

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ABSTRACT

Dental corrections play a pivotal role in enhancing psychosocial health among adolescents and adults, offering significant improvements in self-esteem, social interactions, and overall psychological well-being. Adolescents, who are particularly vulnerable to social pressures and self-esteem issues, benefit greatly from orthodontic treatments that address malocclusions and misalignments. These treatments lead to heightened self-confidence, reduced social anxiety, and fewer instances of bullying, fostering healthier social development and mental health. In adults, dental corrections not only improve aesthetics but also enhance professional and personal interactions. Improved dental health leads to increased social engagement, better communication, and higher levels of life satisfaction, reducing social withdrawal and depressive symptoms. The ability to smile confidently, speak clearly, and eat comfortably without feeling self-conscious is crucial for mental well-being. Individuals with enhanced dental aesthetics report significant improvements in their quality of life, engaging more in social activities and forming meaningful relationships. Research supports the profound impact of dental corrections on reducing anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Adolescents and adults who undergo these treatments experience a notable boost in self-esteem and confidence, which translates into improved academic performance, career opportunities, and overall life satisfaction. The broader implications of these findings emphasize the need for dental care practices to incorporate psychosocial considerations, enhancing the overall patient experience and promoting long-term mental health benefits. By prioritizing the psychosocial outcomes of dental treatments, dental professionals can significantly improve the quality of life for their patients, contributing to their overall well-being and societal participation.

Keywords: Dental corrections, Psychosocial benefits, Self-esteem, Social interactions, Mental well-being

INTRODUCTION

Dental corrections, encompassing a wide range of treatments from orthodontic braces to restorative surgeries, play a critical role in enhancing both aesthetic and functional aspects of oral health. While the physical benefits of these corrections are well-documented, the psychosocial impacts are equally significant but often less emphasized. Adolescence and adulthood are pivotal stages in life where social interactions and self-perception greatly influence overall well-being. Dental corrections during these periods can profoundly affect an individual's psychosocial health, impacting self-esteem, social

relationships, and overall quality of life. Adolescents, in particular, are highly susceptible to social pressures and the desire for acceptance within peer groups. Dental issues such as malocclusion, misaligned teeth, and other aesthetic concerns can lead to negative self-perception and social anxiety. Research indicates that adolescents with untreated dental issues are more likely to experience bullying and social isolation, which can have long-term effects on their mental health.¹ Corrective dental treatments not only improve physical appearance but also bolster confidence and social acceptance, contributing to a healthier psychosocial development.²

In adults, the psychosocial benefits of dental corrections are equally substantial. Adults may seek dental corrections for various reasons, including improving aesthetics, restoring function, or correcting previous untreated dental issues. The societal perception of a healthy, attractive smile can influence professional opportunities, social interactions, and personal relationships. Studies have shown that adults who undergo dental corrections report higher levels of self-esteem and are more likely to engage in social activities.³ This enhancement in self-perception and social engagement leads to improved mental health and overall life satisfaction. Moreover, the psychological impact of dental corrections extends beyond self-esteem and social interactions. The ability to smile without embarrassment, speak clearly, and eat comfortably contributes to a person's overall quality of life. Individuals with dental corrections report fewer instances of social withdrawal and depressive symptoms, highlighting the critical role of oral health in mental well-being.⁴ The intersection of dental health and psychological health underscores the importance of a holistic approach to dental care, where the focus is not only on physical corrections but also on the psychosocial benefits that these treatments provide. This review paper aims to explore the psychosocial benefits of dental corrections in adolescents and adults, highlighting the impact on self-esteem, social interactions, and overall quality of life.

REVIEW

The psychosocial benefits of dental corrections in both adolescents and adults are multifaceted, significantly enhancing self-esteem, social interactions, and overall quality of life. Adolescents undergoing orthodontic treatment often experience a marked improvement in self-perception and confidence. This enhancement is crucial during a developmental stage where peer acceptance and body image are paramount. For instance, orthodontic treatment has been shown to reduce social anxiety and improve the social experiences of adolescents, thereby promoting healthier social development and reducing the risk of mental health issues later in life.⁵ In adults, the psychosocial impact of dental corrections can be equally profound. Adults who receive dental corrections often report feeling more confident and satisfied with their appearance, which translates to improved personal and professional interactions. These benefits are not limited to superficial changes but extend to significant improvements in mental health. For example, studies indicate that adults with improved dental aesthetics are more likely to engage in social activities and report higher levels of life satisfaction.⁶ The reduction in social withdrawal and depressive symptoms among these individuals highlights the integral role that dental health plays in overall well-being. Ultimately, the psychosocial benefits of dental corrections underscore the importance of comprehensive dental care that addresses both physical and mental health aspects. By recognizing and prioritizing these benefits, dental professionals can contribute to the holistic well-being of their patients.

Improved self-esteem and confidence

The correlation between dental corrections and enhanced self-esteem and confidence is a critical aspect of psychosocial health. Adolescents and adults alike experience significant improvements in their self-perception following dental treatments, which profoundly affects their overall mental well-being. For adolescents, the impact of dental corrections on self-esteem is particularly pronounced. During these formative years, physical appearance and peer acceptance are highly influential on self-worth and social identity. Orthodontic treatments, such as braces and aligners, can dramatically improve dental aesthetics by correcting malocclusions and misalignments. This transformation often results in heightened self-esteem and reduced social anxiety. Research demonstrates that adolescents who undergo orthodontic treatment report significant increases in self-confidence, which in turn positively influences their social interactions and academic performance.⁷ The reduction in teasing and bullying associated with visible dental issues further contributes to a more positive self-image and a healthier psychosocial development.

In adults, the psychosocial benefits of improved dental aesthetics are equally substantial. Adults seeking dental corrections are often motivated by a desire to enhance their appearance and address long-standing dental issues that may have been neglected during their youth. The resulting improvements in dental appearance can lead to substantial boosts in self-esteem. Studies indicate that adults with improved dental aesthetics feel more confident in both personal and professional settings, leading to better social engagement and increased opportunities for career advancement.⁸ The enhancement of facial aesthetics through dental corrections can also lead to a more youthful appearance, further contributing to improved self-confidence and overall life satisfaction.

Moreover, the psychological impact of dental corrections extends beyond surface-level changes. The ability to smile confidently without feeling self-conscious plays a significant role in social interactions and the formation of personal relationships. Individuals with enhanced dental aesthetics are more likely to engage in social activities, which fosters a sense of belonging and reduces feelings of social isolation. This increased social participation is closely linked to improved mental health outcomes, as positive social interactions are a key determinant of overall psychological well-being.⁹

The cumulative effect of these benefits underscores the importance of addressing dental issues not only from a functional perspective but also from a psychosocial standpoint. Dental professionals have a crucial role in recognizing and communicating the potential psychosocial benefits of dental corrections to their patients. By doing so, they can help patients appreciate the broader implications of dental health on their overall quality of life and encourage a more proactive approach to dental care. The

improvements in self-esteem and confidence resulting from dental corrections are profound, positively influencing various aspects of an individual's life. Both adolescents and adults can experience enhanced self-worth, reduced social anxiety, and greater social engagement, leading to a more fulfilling and mentally healthy life.

Enhanced social interactions and relationships

The enhancement of social interactions and relationships is a significant psychosocial benefit of dental corrections. Both adolescents and adults who undergo these treatments often experience improved social experiences, which are integral to their overall well-being and quality of life. For adolescents, dental issues can be a considerable source of social stress. Misaligned teeth, overbites, and other dental irregularities often lead to negative attention, bullying, and social isolation. These experiences can severely impact an adolescent's ability to form healthy social relationships. However, orthodontic treatments can drastically alter this dynamic. Research indicates that adolescents who receive orthodontic treatment show marked improvements in their social interactions and are less likely to be targets of bullying.¹⁰ By aligning teeth and improving dental aesthetics, these treatments help adolescents feel more comfortable and accepted within their peer groups, fostering positive social relationships and enhancing their overall social development.

In adults, the social benefits of dental corrections are also profound. Adults may seek dental treatments to correct issues that have long affected their confidence and social behavior. Improved dental aesthetics can lead to better first impressions, which are crucial in both personal and professional contexts. Adults with enhanced smiles are more likely to engage in social activities, which in turn broadens their social networks and strengthens existing relationships. Studies have shown that adults who undergo dental corrections report feeling more confident in social settings, leading to more frequent and fulfilling social interactions.¹¹ This increase in social engagement not only boosts their social life but also contributes to a higher quality of life overall.

Furthermore, the ability to communicate effectively without feeling self-conscious about one's dental appearance is critical in forming and maintaining relationships. Clear speech and an attractive smile are important aspects of non-verbal communication, which plays a significant role in social interactions. Adults with improved dental aesthetics report feeling more at ease during conversations, which enhances their ability to connect with others and build meaningful relationships. The reduction in social anxiety and self-consciousness associated with dental corrections enables individuals to be more open and engaging in their interactions, thereby enriching their social lives.¹²

The broader implications of these improvements in social interactions and relationships highlight the importance of comprehensive dental care that addresses both functional and aesthetic concerns. Dental professionals can play a pivotal role in enhancing their patients' social well-being by providing treatments that improve dental aesthetics. By doing so, they contribute not only to the physical health of their patients but also to their mental and social health. The enhanced social interactions and relationships resulting from dental corrections are substantial, positively influencing various aspects of life. Both adolescents and adults can experience greater social acceptance, reduced social anxiety, and improved communication skills, leading to more satisfying and fulfilling social lives.

Psychological well-being and quality of life

Dental corrections have a profound impact on psychological well-being and quality of life, extending beyond mere aesthetic improvements. The psychological benefits associated with improved dental health contribute significantly to an individual's overall mental and emotional state. For adolescents, the psychological effects of dental corrections are particularly impactful. Adolescence is a critical period for the development of self-identity and self-worth, and dental issues can negatively influence these aspects. Orthodontic treatments that correct malocclusions and other dental irregularities play a crucial role in enhancing psychological well-being. Research indicates that adolescents who undergo such treatments experience reduced levels of anxiety and depression, leading to an overall improvement in their mental health.¹³ The alleviation of psychological distress associated with dental issues allows adolescents to focus better on their academic and social pursuits, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life.

Adults also experience significant psychological benefits from dental corrections. Many adults seek dental treatments to rectify issues that have long been a source of embarrassment or discomfort. The improvement in dental aesthetics can lead to enhanced self-perception and reduced self-consciousness, which are essential for mental health. Studies have shown that adults who undergo dental corrections report higher levels of life satisfaction and a greater sense of well-being.⁸ These improvements are not merely superficial; they reflect deeper psychological changes that enhance the overall quality of life. Adults with improved dental health are more likely to engage in social activities, pursue career opportunities, and enjoy their daily lives without the burden of dental insecurities. Furthermore, the ability to smile confidently and interact socially without fear of judgment is a significant factor in psychological well-being. A confident smile can enhance one's social presence, making individuals feel more approachable and engaged in their social environments. This positive feedback loop contributes to better mental health and a higher quality of life. Individuals with improved dental aesthetics report fewer instances of social withdrawal and depressive symptoms, highlighting the

integral role of dental health in psychological well-being.¹⁴ The enhancement of mental health through dental corrections underscores the importance of comprehensive dental care that addresses both physical and emotional aspects.

Dental professionals play a crucial role in facilitating these psychological benefits by providing treatments that improve dental health and aesthetics. By recognizing the broader implications of dental health on mental well-being, dental practitioners can offer holistic care that significantly enhances their patients' quality of life. The psychological well-being and quality of life improvements resulting from dental corrections are substantial. Both adolescents and adults can experience reduced anxiety, improved self-perception, and greater life satisfaction. These benefits highlight the importance of integrating psychological considerations into dental care to promote overall mental and emotional health.

CONCLUSION

Dental corrections significantly enhance self-esteem, social interactions, and psychological well-being in both adolescents and adults, leading to an overall improved quality of life. Recognizing and addressing these psychosocial benefits is crucial for holistic dental care. Therefore, integrating these aspects into dental treatment plans can profoundly impact patients' mental and emotional health.

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: Not required

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Cite this article as: Alhammad KS, Alfaqeeh ME, Alhazmi HM, Alqahtani AS. Psychosocial benefits of dental corrections in adolescents and adults. Int J Community Med Public Health 2024;11:3683-6.