

OP17 PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF BULLYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN RELATION TO DENTOFACIAL FEATURES AND ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT

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AIMS: A significant proportion of adolescents may experience some form of bullying because of their malocclusions and/or orthodontic treatment. Social media offers a novel and accessible resource for gaining unrestricted insights into the social culture of oral health-related bullying. The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature and psychosocial impact of orthodontic and oral health-related bullying experiences reported in social media.

MATERIALS AND METHOD: Twitter's database was searched from 2010 to 2014 using several relevant keywords ('bullied' OR 'bullying' OR 'bully' OR 'teased' AND 'teeth' OR 'braces'). Two investigators assessed the Twitter posts, and selected those that conveyed the experiences or opinions of bullying victims. The posts were qualitatively analysed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS: Of the 548 posts screened, 321 met the study's inclusion criteria and were included in the final sample. Six primary categories relating to oral health and bullying were identified: (1) morphological features of teeth and malocclusions; (2) braces and orthodontic appliances; (3) personal attributes or personality traits; (4) coping mechanisms; (5) psychological and psychosocial impacts; (6) the role of family. Bullied individuals reported a diverse range of psychological impacts and coping mechanisms. Secondary categories were also identified. Family members, for example, were reported to play both a contributory and mediatory role in bullying.

CONCLUSION: Social media can provide new and valuable information about the causes and social issues associated with oral health-related bullying. Some coping mechanisms may minimise the negative effects of bullying. These findings have important clinical implications for the management of patient expectations and compliance.