



## Orthodontic Braces for The Fashion or Esthetic: Report of 2 Cases.

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**Abstract:** Although malocclusion correction is the major reason for orthodontic treatment, these braces are occasionally worn for aesthetic or fashion reasons. These orthodontic braces can be colourful and may be of many different shapes than those used for orthodontic treatment. Using false dental braces offered by dental quacks could endanger the patients' oral health. However, many people, particularly young people, still find these fake braces appealing. We present two cases where coloured orthodontic braces were used for fashion purposes. A male patient (case 1) of 24 years with occlusal caries in the maxillary right first molar. The patient was wearing braces purely for aesthetic reasons. In the second case, a 22-year-old male patient was wearing false or fashion braces for cosmetic reasons while having malocclusion and needing therapeutic orthodontic therapy. Fashion braces, commonly referred to as fake braces, closely resemble functional orthodontic braces in appearance. However, they serve no therapeutic function. This substandard orthodontic treatment may cause damage to patients' teeth, gums, lips, and supporting bones. This trend is currently present in the nations of the Middle East. Therefore, regulations and procedures need to be more strictly enforced to track and stop the usage of fashion braces.

**Keywords:** Dental braces, Fashion, Fake braces, Orthodontic braces, Orthodontic treatment, Oral Health

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Received On 2 November, 2022

Revised On 2 January, 2023

Accepted On 10 January, 2023

Published On 1 March, 2023

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### Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from any funding agencies in the public, commercial or not for profit sectors.

### Citation

Shumua Mahmoud Abdullah Shami, Fahad Ali Abdullallah Alshehri, Hussain Haider Kariri, Al Abbas Mashhour Shammakhi, Hussam Hadi Madkhali and Fareedi Mukram Ali , Orthodontic Braces for The Fashion or Esthetic: Report of 2 Cases..(2023).Int. J. Life Sci. Pharma Res.13(2), L46-L49 <http://dx.doi.org/10.22376/ijlpr.2023.13.2.L46-L49>

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Fixed orthodontic appliances, commonly known as braces, are devices used to manage malocclusion. In some countries, these orthodontic braces are now used as a fashion among teenagers. They are referred to in these nations by a variety of names, including "Fake or Faux or Fashion Braces," "Behel" in Indonesia, and "Zeena or Tajmeli" in the Middle East<sup>1</sup>. The practice of fashion braces was first seen in Thailand without any therapeutic or medical intent in 2006. From this country, the trend quickly spread to neighboring countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and, most recently, Cambodia.<sup>1</sup> These fashion braces look very similar to real orthodontic braces and do not have any therapeutic or medical purpose. They come with colourful cartoon characters attached to the orthodontic rubber bands or with a variety of ornamentation such as diamonds<sup>2</sup>. Here we are presenting two case reports of patients wearing orthodontic braces for fashion purposes.

### 1.1 Ethical Statement

Permission was obtained from the institution to conduct and publish the case study. Participants were explained the study's purpose, and written informed consent was obtained from both participants before conducting the study. The study was

conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki for biomedical research involving human subjects.

### 1.2 Case reports

We present two cases where the patients were wearing orthodontic braces for esthetics and to enhance their esthetics appearance. Through this case series, we intend to highlight the harmful effects of wearing substandard orthodontic braces for fashion.

#### • Case 1

A male patient of age 24 complained of caries in the maxillary right posterior teeth. On examination, we found occlusal caries in the maxillary right first molar. Also, the patient was seen wearing the fashion braces only in the anterior maxillary teeth. The braces were of metal and present from the maxillary right first premolar to the left first premolar. The hook was absent for these braces except for the braces on the first premolars. These braces were not bonded according to the guidelines of the orthodontic treatment, specifying the purpose of these braces as fashion only. (Figure. 1)



**Fig 1: Fake or fashion braces in a 24-year-old male patient.**

#### • Case 2

A 22-year-old male patient came for the cleaning of teeth in the maxillary and mandibular anterior region. On examination, although he has malocclusion and orthodontic problems that

need therapeutic orthodontics, the patient wore fake or fashion braces extending from the maxillary right to the left canine. The braces were not containing hooks except for the canine teeth and were not aligned according to the guidelines for the orthodontic treatment. (Fig 2)



**Fig 2: Fake or fashion braces in a 22-year-old male patient.**

## 2. DISCUSSION

In Thailand, orthodontic braces, when used as 'fashion braces', are sometimes worn by teenagers when there is no need for

an orthodontic treatment<sup>1-4</sup>. Though no scientific literature or official papers affirm the origin of this fashion braces practice, this trend probably started in Thailand and now spread across various regions to countries like Malaysia, the Philippines,

Indonesia, and China<sup>1</sup>. The reason for wearing these braces can be variable. These are worn as fixed appliance therapy and are seen as expensive and 'cool'<sup>4</sup>. The fashion braces service has been categorized into two types which were fixed and removable appliances. The four subtypes of the fixed appliance were bracket or O-ring, chain, coloured tube, and wire types. The removable retainer was divided into two subtypes: one with and one without a pink acrylic portion<sup>5</sup>. The brackets can range from metal, rubber or ceramic. These can be with a hook or without the hook, big or small, and so on<sup>1</sup>. In a cross-sectional study done by Alhazmi et al.<sup>6</sup> among school and university students in Jazan city Saudi Arabia, 9.9% of students reported using fashion braces, and 25.7% of those who did not already use fashion braces expressed a desire to do so in the future. A Study done by Al-Yahya Y et al.<sup>7</sup> to evaluate orthodontic patient satisfaction in Buraidah City, Al-Qassim, Saudi Arabia, found 2 out of 85 patients who did orthodontic treatment for the fashion without any reason for the correction of the malocclusion. In several Southeast Asian nations, fake braces are sold by unlicensed individuals who lack any training or certification in either orthodontics or dentistry. Most fake braces are placed on patients' teeth from beauty salons or at residential homes. It is also seen that these fake braces are sold over the counter on the side of the streets, and even through online purchases. Some websites and social media platforms even provide do-it-yourself self-videos<sup>1-3</sup>. According to a study by Hakami et al.<sup>8</sup>, most participants had their fashion braces fitted at private clinics. Most of these fashion braces were placed by general dentists and dental assistants. Some patients may request these braces before starting full-fledged orthodontic treatment, acting as "trial braces". These are used to know how actual braces "feel" before spending money on them since; the cost of these fashion braces or fake braces is one-fourth of the actual treatment braces<sup>1</sup>. In our two cases (cases 1 and 2), false braces wearers were reported from Jazan province, their purpose in wearing these fashion braces was for mental satisfaction without reason. The first case in our case report got his braces done by a dental surgeon, and the second was unaware of the specific classification of who placed the braces. Both patients were unaware of the potential ill effects of wearing braces for fashion. The concept behind wearing dental braces is a human effort to fulfil their wish to be better or to show their self-existence. Dental braces to them are not only for teeth alignment but also for fashion due to the trend seen on social media<sup>9</sup>. The ratio of orthodontists to population is less in many countries, and this limited number of specialists contributes towards the inability to satisfy the demand. Therefore, the trend of using fake braces rapidly spreads in non-government clinics by non-qualified individuals<sup>2</sup>. The lower prices, convenience, and ease of accessibility to the fashion braces aid in spreading its usage and increasing its demand, especially among the generation between 19-25 years old because it is technologically-savvy as they grew up in the information age and prone to use the social media daily. Moreover, they are more inclined to use sources from the internet because the information is easily retrieved and more effective than printed sources such as books or lent materials from the library<sup>12</sup>. There can be numerous hazards associated with this practice, such as this can increase tooth movement, increased crowding of the teeth, increased chances of tooth decay, increased periodontal diseases, ditching in of the incisors, tooth colour darkening, enamel loss because of repeated bonding and debonding, decreased oral hygiene, etc.<sup>1,2,9</sup>. Also, the use of unsterilized equipment or the use of substandard adhesives could be the cause of infections and

illness. Moreover, there have been reported cases of teenagers who died after using fashion braces due to the inferior material quality and some toxic heavy metals such as cadmium<sup>1,2</sup>. The DIY kit for fashion braces accessible online has been seen to include over-the-counter cyanoacrylate, often used in plumping work as adhesive for the bracket fixation<sup>1</sup>. This substandard treatment with fashion braces not only causes damage to patients' teeth, gums, lips, and supporting bones, but these practices may also cause internal damage and cancer<sup>2,10</sup>. There have been cases reported in newspapers available on the internet of cases of teenagers who died after using fashion braces<sup>2,11</sup>. It's been found that some fashion braces are made up of inferior material quality and which has been laden with toxic heavy metals such as cadmium, as per the newspaper reports<sup>2,11</sup>. Many patients are unaware of wearing these fashion braces' consequences or side effects. A Study conducted in Malaysia concluded that only 35% of the population was aware of the side effects of wearing fake braces<sup>12</sup>. In their work, Riyam Haleem R et al.<sup>13</sup>, based on heavy metal ions contained in metallic materials, submerged in a simulated bodily fluid (SBF) and analyzed using inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectroscopy, determine the types of metal ions leachable from detachable fake braces. They discovered that the false braces released considerable Ca and K ions<sup>13</sup>. Orthodontic and dentofacial orthopaedics speciality is a method of preventing, diagnosing, and correcting malocclusions due to skeletal and neuromuscular abnormalities related to developing or mature dentofacial structures<sup>14</sup>. Orthodontics is a speciality in dentistry that is so sophisticated and broad that it requires extra years of learning the art and science of orthodontics. This usually requires a master's degree in the speciality of orthodontics after a bachelor's in dentistry to practice it. This unscientific placement of fashion braces by unauthorized personnel, which are not trained in the speciality of orthodontics and are not well versed in the treatment, can cause a lot of health-related hazards. A study by Hassan H et al.<sup>15</sup> explored the youths' experience from Klang Valley on using fake braces and ascertained that not all the treatments done with fake braces were perceived as favourable. In contrast, most of the respondents in their study felt that fake braces led to worse consequences. Rani H. et al.<sup>16</sup>, in their review of "A Descriptive Summary of Unlicensed Dental Practice", found that unlicensed dental practitioners had more Instagram followers than Facebook followers, which may be related to young mobile users who love taking photos and sharing them instantly on the Instagram app on their phones commonly seen among current generation youths.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Dental practitioners must make patients aware of the adverse effects of using these fake or fashionable braces. Also, there is a need to form regulations prohibiting this type of treatment armamentarium by anyone for unauthorized purposes. Hence, dental healthcare professionals must increase awareness of the adverse effects of fashion braces in the community. Furthermore, higher authorities should regulate the unscientific treatment of fashion motives by unauthorized personnel. Thus substandard orthodontic treatment may cause damage to patients' teeth, gums, lips, and supporting bones. Therefore, regulations and procedures need to be more strictly enforced to track and stop the usage of fashion braces.

#### 4. AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Dr Shumua Mahmoud Abdullah Shami and Dr Fahad Ali Abdullah Alshehri conceptualized and gathered the data about this case report. Dr Hussain Haider Kariri gave the necessary inputs and managed the literary searches. Dr Al abbas Mashhour Shammakhi and Dr Husam Hadi Madkhali provided valuable inputs on the manuscript. Fareedi Mukram

Ali curated the data and provided valuable inputs toward the design of the manuscript. Finally, all authors discussed and contributed to the final version of the manuscript.

#### 5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest declared none.

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